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The Queer Cinema of Jacques Demy

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Table of contents

Acknowledgements	5
Abstract	6
List of illustrations	7
Note about references	14
Introduction	15
Chapter 1: New critical approaches to the Demy problem	26
Authorship	28
Genre	32
Stardom	34
Emotion and style	37
Queer and feminist methodologies	40
Feminism against the canon	40
Queer studies	45
Chapter 2: Demy and the New Wave	52
What is the New Wave?	55
Demy disappears from the New Wave canon	59
Is Demy New Wave?	63
<i>La Luxure</i>	65
<i>Lola</i>	69
Emotional realism and subjective time	71
The wrong kind of cinephilia	75
Queering the New Wave gaze and the New Wave man	81
<i>La Baie des Anges</i>	86

Paratext and publicity	87
The heterosexual couple	90
Denaturalising Jeanne Moreau	96
Conclusion	101
Chapter 3: Demy's failed films	103
<i>Model Shop</i>	108
New Hollywood and queer narrative time	112
Gendered work	118
The space of the city	122
<i>Parking</i>	127
<i>Parking</i> as bisexual cinema	131
<i>Parking</i> as AIDS cinema	138
A failed representation of success	148
Conclusion	152
Chapter 4: Demy and the politics of camp	154
<i>Les Demoiselles de Rochefort</i>	157
Aestheticism and theatricality	160
Camping the heterosexual couple	163
Stardom and the song-and-dance man	170
Camp and utopia	175
<i>L'Événement le plus important depuis que l'homme a marché sur la lune</i>	181
Gender panic	184
Mass media and reproduction	193
Stardom and the star couple	199

Conclusion	205
Chapter 5: Demy and Hollywood	206
Melodrama	209
<i>Les Parapluies de Cherbourg</i>	213
Sentimental colours, sentimental music	220
‘Why will all women cry at the <i>Umbrellas of Cherbourg</i> ?’	229
Melodramatic time	233
Conclusion	238
<i>Une chambre en ville</i>	239
‘The popular’	244
Melodrama and the bourgeois family home	251
Conclusion	261
<i>Trois places pour le 26</i>	262
Demy remembers Montand	265
‘Mass art as folk art’	272
Mourning and melancholy for musicals	277
Conclusion	283
Conclusion	284
Bibliography	293
Filmography	309
Teleography	320

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this work is my own and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Abstract

This thesis examines the cinema of Jacques Demy through a variety of queer and feminist lenses. It aims to investigate and politicise Demy's marginalisation in French film culture, and place his cinema in its social and cinematic context in a way that few previous studies have done. Demy's films trouble hierarchies of cultural value and binary oppositions, and they often include multiple cultural registers and modes of address, and draw from diverse cinematic traditions. In order to account for the films' hybridity, the thesis uses several methodologies. It performs close analysis on ten of Demy's thirteen feature films, in order to make arguments informed by theoretical frameworks such as camp, feminist writing on the women's film, and recent queer theory on failure. Through an engagement with the contemporary reception of Demy's films, the thesis also investigates the reasons for his marginalisation. The case study of Demy's cinema is thereby used to challenge and complicate the canons and narratives of French cinema, with the understanding that canon formation reflects the values of dominant groups.

The first chapter outlines where the thesis fits in a fairly sparse body of scholarly writing about Demy, and highlights key theoretical and methodological texts. Next, the thesis turns to Demy's place in the French New Wave canon. This chapter analyses *Lola* (1961), *La Luxure* (1962) and *La Baie des Anges* (1963), and draws out issues of genre and address. Chapter three, on Demy's 'failed' films, acknowledges that most of Demy's films were critical and box-office failures. It analyses two of these films, *Model Shop* (1968) and *Parking* (1985). Chapter four, on camp, uncovers the political project of Demy's camp aesthetics, by reading *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* (1967) and *L'Événement le plus important depuis que l'homme a marché sur la lune* (1973) through the lens of camp. Finally, chapter five argues that Demy's use of Hollywood genres place these films in a specific and historicised emotional register. The case studies in this chapter are the sung melodramas *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (1964) and *Une chambre en ville* (1982), and the musical *Trois places pour le 26* (1988).

This thesis is among the first scholarly works to consistently approach Demy as a queer filmmaker, informed by extensive archival research into his films' reception. It therefore represents a significant contribution to an emerging body of work on a heretofore neglected filmmaker.

List of illustrations

Chapter 2

- Fig. 1a: Jacques looks at passing women, *La Luxure*.
- Fig. 1b: The young woman crosses the road away from Jacques, *La Luxure*.
- Fig. 2a: Bernard's mother looks into the camera, *La Luxure*.
- Fig. 2b: Bernard's father looks into the camera, *La Luxure*.
- Fig. 3a: Cécile is centred, Franky's face is obscured, *Lola*.
- Fig. 3b: Cécile is centred, Franky is too tall to fit in the frame, *Lola*.
- Fig. 4a: Michel enters through a pair of curtains, *Lola*.
- Fig. 4b: Lola steps forwards into focus and smiles, *Lola*.
- Fig. 4c: The dancers form a diegetic audience, *Lola*.
- Fig. 4d: Dolly looks into the camera and weeps, *Lola*.
- Fig. 5a: Sailors look at a poster of Lola before entering L'Eldorado, *Lola*.
- Fig. 5b: The first glimpse of Lola, in long shot in a crowded frame, *Lola*.
- Fig. 6a: A sailor's perspective on a dancer, *Lola*.
- Fig. 6b: A dancer's perspective on a sailor, *Lola*.
- Fig. 7a: Roland and Jeanne discuss Roland's misfortunes, *Lola*.
- Fig. 7b: Jeanne suggests a job for Roland, *Lola*.
- Fig. 8a: Jean wakes up in the hotel room, *La Baie des Anges*.
- Fig. 8b: Jean lounges on the beach, *La Baie des Anges*.
- Fig. 9a: Jackie and Jean are framed as a couple, *La Baie des Anges*.
- Fig. 9b: A dissolve superimposes Jackie and Jean's faces on the roulette wheel, *La Baie des Anges*.
- Fig. 10a: Jackie asks Jean which dress she should wear to dinner, *La Baie des Anges*.
- Fig. 10b: Jackie tries on a Pierre Cardin gown, *La Baie des Anges*.

- Fig. 10c: Jackie poses against the skyline, *La Baie des Anges*.
Fig. 10d: Jackie affects a quizzical gesture, *La Baie des Anges*.

Chapter 3

- Fig. 1a: The opening shot, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 1b: George and Gloria's house, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 2a: Mark's hidden videocamera, *Peeping Tom*.
Fig. 2b: Mark's victim seen through the viewfinder, *Peeping Tom*.
Fig. 2c: Lola seen through the viewfinder, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 2d: George's camera, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 3a: Wide shot of George and Lola, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 3a: Closer shot of Lola's face, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 3c: Closer shot of George's face, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 3d: Wider shot after George has taken a photo, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 4a: George's perspective on the drill, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 4b: The drill's perspective on George, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 4c: Shot of George from outside the house, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 4d: George's perspective on the men from the finance company, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 5a: George hidden by a column, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 5d: Gloria in an improbable morning outfit, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 5c: Gloria in triplicate, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 6a: The mansion in Beverley Hills, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 6b: George and Gloria's house and the drill, *Model Shop*.
Fig. 7a: Orphée and his reflection, *Orphée*.

- Fig. 7b: Death's two guards, *Orphée*.
- Fig. 7c: Orphée on the shoulders of his fans, *Parking*.
- Fig. 7d: Orphée's fans return his loving gaze, *Parking*.
- Fig. 8a: Orphée and Eurydice filmed as a couple, *Parking*.
- Fig. 8b: Orphée, Calais and Eurydice filmed as a three, *Parking*.
- Fig. 8c: Orphée, Calais and Aristée, *Parking*.
- Fig. 8d: Eurydice isolated from the group, *Parking*.
- Fig. 9a: Bosmans in a train station, *L'Homme blessé*.
- Fig. 9b: Jean in an underpass, *L'Homme blessé*.
- Fig. 9c: The motorway underpass, *Les Nuits fauves*.
- Fig. 9d: The motorway underpass, *Les Nuits fauves*.
- Fig. 10a: The car park, *Parking*.
- Fig. 10b: The space between the car park and hell, *Parking*.
- Fig. 10c: Hell, *Parking*.
- Fig. 11a: Caron drives Orphée into hell, *Parking*.
- Fig. 11b: Bosmans drives Jean to the area with the parked cars, *L'Homme blessé*.
- Fig. 12a: Wide shot of Orphée's concert, *Parking*.
- Fig. 12b: Closer shot of the same moment, *Parking*.
- Fig. 12c: Wider shot which distances the viewer from the performance, *Parking*.
- Fig. 12d: Closer shot filmed from the front row, *Parking*.

Chapter 4

- Fig. 1a: Solange and Andy in white, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 1b: Maxence, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.

- Fig. 1c: Delphine, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 1d: Yvonne and Simon in yellow, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 2a: Bill and Etienne on either side of Solange and Delphine, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 2b: Solange and Delphine on either side of Bill and Etienne, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 3a: Bill and Etienne side by side, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 3b: Solange and Delphine side by side, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 4a: Delphine leans over Etienne, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 4b: Solange leans over Bill, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 5a: Solange jumps into Andy's arms, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 5b: Andy supports Solange, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 5c: Solange turns away and Andy pulls her back, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 5d: Lise turns away and Jerry pulls her back, *An American in Paris*.
- Fig. 6a: Delphine walks to Guillaume's gallery surrounded by dancers, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 6b: Guillaume points a gun in the direction of the camera, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.
- Fig. 7a: The thumb takes up the left side of the screen, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 7b: A slice of the thumb is visible on the left, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 7c: The thumb juts into the right side of the screen, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 7d: The thumb towers between Marco and Irène.
- Fig. 8a: The medical conference: mostly men in similar suits, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 8b: Women in Irène's salon, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 9a : Marco in the photo studio, *L'Événement*.

- Fig. 9b: The photographers, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 9c: A poster of Marco being put up, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 9d: A wider shot of the poster being put up, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 9e: Six posters, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 9f: The camera turns to reveal the Arc de Triomphe, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 10a: A newspaper with the headline, 'An exceptional event', *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 10b: Marco on the cover of various newspapers and magazines, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 11a: A bank of television screens, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 11b: The same shots with more screens showing Marco, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 12a: Marco reads a newspaper with the headline, 'The pregnant man was rubbish', *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 12b: The same newspaper in the gutter, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 13a: Deneuve and Mastroianni in a sparkly love heart in the opening credits, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 13b: Micheline Presle in a circle in the opening credits, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 14a: Irène with big curly hair and a faux-fur jacket, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 14b: Irène with her hair up, large hoop earrings and a faux-fur jacket, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 15a: Marco in a lilac suit, *L'Événement*.
- Fig. 15b: Marco in his orange pyjamas, *L'Événement*.

Chapter 5

- Fig. 1a: Laura makes tea, *Tea and Sympathy*.
- Fig. 1b: Geneviève has maternity clothes fitted, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 1c: Kay cries with Cary, *All That Heaven Allows*.

- Fig. 1d: Geneviève cries over Guy, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 2a: Guy in the red, white and blue garage where he works, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 2b: Guy and Geneviève embrace after he tells her he is going to Algeria, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 3a: Guy's blue room and outfit, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 3b: Geneviève in pink, in the pink umbrella shop, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 3c: Geneviève clutches a blue scarf as she says goodbye to Guy, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 3d: Geneviève in brown and black, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 4a: Elise's green living room, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 4b: The green stairwell to Elise's apartment, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 4c: Madeleine in light green and yellow, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 4d: Madeleine in dark green, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 5a: Geneviève, in a dress that matches the wallpaper, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 5b: Guy and Madeleine in costumes that match the surroundings, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 6a: Geneviève in tears, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 6b: Geneviève chooses Roland Cassard as her king, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 6c: Geneviève trying on a wedding dress, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 6d: Geneviève at her wedding, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 8a: Geneviève and Guy embrace, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 8b: A match cut transports them into a bar, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.

- Fig. 9a: Geneviève and Guy in front of a tiled wall, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 9b: Guy returns to the same spot years later, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 9c: Geneviève and Guy in a bar, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 9d: Guy's perspective on the same table in the same bar years later, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.
- Fig. 10a: The line of demonstrators in the opening scene, *Une chambre en ville*.
- Fig. 10b: A crowd gathers for the second demonstration, *Une chambre en ville*.
- Fig. 11a: A caption gives the action a documentary veneer, *Une chambre en ville*.
- Fig. 11b: A group of women demonstrators, *Une chambre en ville*.
- Fig. 11c: The camera isolates some of the film's named characters, *Une chambre en ville*.
- Fig. 11d: A closer shot of François Guilbaud, the film's male lead, *Une chambre en ville*.

Conclusion

- Fig. 1a: A small crowd watches the princess emerge in the dress the colour of the weather, *Peau d'âne*.
- Fig. 1b: The king's perspective on the princess in the moon-coloured dress, *Peau d'âne*.
- Fig. 1c: The king's perspective on the sun-coloured dress, *Peau d'âne*.
- Fig. 1d: The princess's perspective on the king on his cat throne, *Peau d'âne*.
- Fig. 1e: The king and his attendants in blue, *Peau d'âne*.
- Fig. 1f: The prince and his attendants and horses in red, *Peau d'âne*.

A note about referencing

Due to the nature of the archival material I have included in this thesis, some of my referencing is irregular. I studied reviews of Demy's films that have been digitised at the Bibliothèque du film in Paris, and some materials kept in physical archives at the same institution. Many articles were missing various pieces of information including dates, authors, publications and page numbers. Where an article had the author's name, a year and a publication, I have referred to it using the author: date system in the body of the text, and included it in my bibliography. For articles missing the author's name, I have given as much detail as possible in a footnote. Where I have referred to a very large number of articles in a single sentence, I have put author: date references in footnotes to help the reader follow the text.

Introduction

Jacques Demy, a French filmmaker known primarily for his beautiful, sad musical films, has a unique body of work and a contested legacy. Through the three decades of his career, Demy can be seen swimming against cultural tides, with mixed results. He emerged as a young writer-director during the French New Wave, when the dominant critical paradigm was a highly masculinist auteurism, and made two sentimental films in popular genres: *Lola* (1961) and *La Baie des anges/Bay of Angels* (1963). When given the budget to make a musical by a Hollywood studio, he instead made *Model Shop* (1968), a grim, spare film and an unacknowledged forerunner to the New Hollywood movement. He then continued to make musicals like *Parking* (1985) and *Trois places pour le 26/Three Seats for the 26th* (1988) at a time when there was no audience for them in France. A large number of his films were commercially unsuccessful, and deemed artistic failures by the press. The rest, however, particularly three films he made with Catherine Deneuve—*Les Parapluies de Cherbourg/The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964), *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort/The Young Girls of Rochefort* (1967) and *Peau d'âne/Donkey Skin* (1970)—were huge successes, and continue to be celebrated as key pieces of France's cinematic history.

Demy's films have an extremely mixed and eventful critical history, which reflects on the problem he poses to systems of categorisation and gendered hierarchies of cultural value. Demy was surrounded, from the start of his career, by a discourse which maintained that there was something suspect about him in terms of his sexuality or gender presentation. Critics who found Demy's films too romantic, too sentimental or too stylistically extravagant called him, pejoratively, 'perverse'; a 'gentle Sunday

watercolourist'; an 'aesthete'; and a 'sub-Ophuls: a shopkeeper who thinks he has taste' (Graham 1968, 102; Philippe 1964, 124; Benayoun 1962, 22-23). Even at his most successful, Demy was only ever accepted provisionally by the critical establishment. Films such as *Lola*, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Une chambre en ville/A Room in Town* (1982) received praise from film critics who largely disregarded or denigrated their sentimental narratives and their obvious debt to forms of women's mass culture, and would focus instead on their formal achievements. This strategy, Geneviève Sellier argues, was the means by which the French critical establishment, in their writing on popular films, distanced themselves from 'the vulgate with which they shared, whether they liked it or not, the same object of cultural consumption' (Sellier 2008, 25).

Academic studies of French film, which have long favoured *auteur* film over genre film, have by and large ignored Demy, who straddles these two categories. It is only in the last decade that a significant body of critical work about Demy has started to emerge, and critical texts continue to focus on his most successful films. Rather than glossing over Demy's difficult critical history, as many critical and biographical studies of Demy have done, my thesis instead poses the question: in a film culture which is elitist, masculinist and overwhelmingly heterosexual, what does it mean to fail?

Demy was born in Pontchâteau in Normandy in 1931, and grew up in Nantes, where his father was a mechanic and his mother was a hairdresser. He started to make animated and live-action films at a young age. Demy's father insisted that he attend technical college in Nantes, hoping that he would take over the family garage; when he was 18, however, he moved to Paris for art school. Demy was part of the social scene around the *Cahiers du cinéma* in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but he did not write for the publication, and said in later interviews that he felt little affinity for the *Cahiers* group. In 1958, Demy met the filmmaker Agnès Varda, and later he moved into her

house in the south of Paris, where the two of them raised Varda's young daughter Rosalie. Thanks to his social ties to the *Cahiers du cinéma* critics and filmmakers, Demy was able to make his first film, *Lola*, in 1961. The film was well-received in both the popular and film press, although, being released at a time when New Wave films were no longer a big box office draw, it did not attract a large audience.

On the strength of this film, Demy was able to make *La Baie des Anges* with Jeanne Moreau in 1963. In 1964, he made his most enduringly successful film, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*. *Les Parapluies*, with its entirely sung dialogue, extraordinarily bright décor and costumes, memorably heartbreaking narrative, and iconic starring role for Catherine Deneuve, remains Demy's most famous and beloved film. It played in French cinemas for a year, and won the Palme d'or at Cannes, as well as being nominated for five Academy Awards and being exhibited around the world. Demy's next film, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*, starring Deneuve and her sister Françoise Dorléac, Danielle Darrieux, Michel Piccoli and Gene Kelly, was even more successful commercially, although it was not hailed by critics as a masterpiece and a miracle, as *Les Parapluies* was. These two films, alongside *Peau d'âne* are the most enduringly visible part of Demy's legacy. Their memorable music, sets and star performances provide the imagery and sounds that are used to commemorate Demy in retrospectives, exhibitions, press materials, DVD releases, and so on. They construct a vision of Demy's cinema which emphasises fantasy, childhood, whimsy, and joy.

In 1968, Demy was offered a contract with Columbia Pictures in the US, who gave him a large budget with the expectation that he would make a musical. Instead, he made *Model Shop*, a grim, meandering film about a man killing time until he is drafted to Vietnam, where he expects to die. The studio did not like the film, and Demy felt that they buried it. From the release of *Model Shop* onwards, Demy starts to speak in

increasingly bitter tones in interviews about having been rejected by French critics and audiences. In 1970, he returned to France to make *Peau d'âne*, a children's film, which was released in time for Christmas in 1970, and was Demy's biggest box office hit, and his last commercially successful film. In 1971 Demy filmed *The Pied Piper*, his first commission, and in 1972 Demy and Varda's son Mathieu was born.

The following two decades saw Demy release few films. These years of his career are under-emphasised in most accounts of his life. *L'Événement le plus important depuis que l'homme a marché sur la lune/A Slightly Pregnant Man* (1973), a light comedy about a man who becomes pregnant, received very poor reviews and performed badly at the box office, despite starring Catherine Deneuve and Marcello Mastroianni. There followed nine years during which Demy was not able to see through any of his own projects. Instead, he directed two commissions: *Lady Oscar* (1979), a film about the French Revolution based on a Japanese Manga series, which was a hit in Japan and China but never released in France; and *La Naissance du jour/Break of Day* (1980), a TV film about Collette. 1982's *Une chambre en ville*, the story of a doomed love affair set during a dock worker's strike, entirely sung like *les Parapluies*, is often cited as the best film Demy made after *Peau d'âne*.

Agnès Varda's autobiographical film *Les Plages d'Agnès/The Beaches of Agnès* (2009) suggests that Demy was diagnosed with HIV in the mid- or late-1980s. His last two films, *Parking* and *Trois places pour le 26* are musicals with a cheerful surface, which implicitly and explicitly reflect on morbidity, ageing and an artist's legacy. *Parking* was particularly disastrous, both critically and commercially, and in subsequent interviews Demy expressed regret at having made it at all (Clech, Strauss & Toubiana 1988, 61). In 1989 he started working on a film called *Kobi des tamponneuses*, which he had to leave unfinished due to illness (Orléan 2013, 255). Subsequently, Demy and

Varda worked together on *Jacquot de Nantes*, a film that depicts Demy's youth and cinematic education and draws connections between this period of his life and the films he would go on to make. Varda directed the film, based on memoirs by Demy. He died of AIDS-related leukaemia in October 1990, and the film was released in 1991.

In 2013, the Cinémathèque française held a major exhibition and retrospective on Demy's cinema, entitled *Le Monde enchanté de Jacques Demy/The Enchanted World of Jacques Demy*. This showcase and celebration of Demy's work can be regarded as a sign of how far his standing in French film culture has increased since his death. The exhibition's catalogue is the best available gauge of how Demy and his work are currently being presented to the French public. The image of Demy's cinema constructed by the exhibition emphasises the fantastical aspect of his filmmaking. Little mention is made of either the cinematic or the socio-political context in which Demy's films were made: instead, the texts and images present a unique fantasy world of fairy-tale imagery, showgirls and princesses. Although, as Guillaume Boulangé has emphasised, many of Demy's films present men's bodies as objects of love, the catalogue's images almost exclusively figure the big female stars with whom Demy worked: Anouk Aimée, Catherine Deneuve, Delphine Seyrig, and Catherine Deneuve again (Boulangé 2016, 81). In an introductory essay entitled 'Jacques Demy or the Dream Awakened', Serge Toubiana invokes a common trope of Demy scholarship when he writes: 'Jacques Demy's cinema is not political, but *poetic*' (Toubiana 2013, 11).

This distinction between the political and the poetic reflects an extraordinarily limited view of what the political consists of. It is common, however, for biographical and scholarly texts on the filmmaker to suggest that Demy's films form a whimsical, self-contained cinematic universe. Their titles give this away: from Ginette Billard's

‘Jacques Demy and his Other World’ (1964) to Agnès Varda’s documentary *L’Univers de Jacques Demy/The World of Jacques Demy* (1993); the name of the exhibition itself, *Le Monde enchanté de Jacques Demy*; and two articles by Rodney Hill (2008) and Philippe Colomb (2008), and one section of the Cinémathèque exhibition catalogue, which all use the phrase ‘Demy monde’ (literally ‘Demy world’) as a pun on *demi-monde*, which describes a group of people with dubious social standing. There are three particular gaps in dominant narratives about Demy, including the one constructed by *Le Monde enchanté de Jacques Demy*, which form some of the bases of my investigation into Demy’s cinema. They present, by and large, a heterosexual life and heterosexual cinema; they position Demy’s work as singular, isolated from its cinematic context and purely fantastical; and they do not acknowledge the fact that Demy, towards the end of his career, was regarded by most as a failed filmmaker. As a response to these biases and elisions, my thesis approaches Demy’s films as queer texts; I study the relationships Demy’s cinema has with other film cultures; and I look explicitly at the question of failure, as it is represented in Demy’s films, and in the narratives about Demy himself.

There are moments in the essays and interviews collected in the catalogue of *Le Monde enchanté de Jacques Demy* when a different narrative suggests itself. Like a lot of writing on Demy, it contains coded murmurs about his sexuality, or at least indications that he did not fit comfortably into a film culture that was overwhelmingly straight and male. In the preface, Costa-Gavras describes Demy as having ‘an almost feminine delicateness, a far cry from the model of the macho director imposing his authority on everyone’ (Costa-Gavras 2013, 8). Costa-Gavras also notes that Jean Cocteau, who is practically synonymous with gay French art and film, was present and spoke at a screening of *Lola* that he attended in 1961. An essay in the catalogue on Demy’s connections to Cocteau by Guillaume Boulangé is the closest thing the

catalogue has to an open admission of the queer potential of Demy's films. Boulangé places Demy within Cocteau's social and cinematic universe, and writes that *Parking*, a film with openly gay and bisexual characters, reveals a 'secret underside' which had always existed in Demy's films. Later, a poem by Olivia Rosenthal describes, somewhat obliquely, an encounter with *Peau d'âne* as a queer child who knows that the princess won't really be happy with the prince (Rosenthal 2013, 161-163).

These are all, to a greater or lesser extent, veiled indications that Demy's films have queer content, are precious to queer people, or are the work of a queer filmmaker, in a collection which overall favours heterosexual perspectives on his work. This coded or tentative approach to the queerness of Demy's films is becoming less common, as scholars like Anne E. Duggan (2013) and Boulangé have started to study his films as queer films, with queer contexts and queer fans. My thesis also approaches Demy's films as queer films, without hesitation. From *Lola* onwards, these films show people living under uncomfortable social constraints; they present public identity as something performed, sometimes even theatrical, and distinct from the subject; and they are, by and large, sad about romantic love. They feature men who are not particularly interested in women, and women living happy lives together without men.

The actors with whom Demy worked were often front-and-centre in the promotion of his films, and were discussed a great deal in reviews of the films in the popular press. Images of stars such as Catherine Deneuve and Anouk Aimée also continue to hold important places in commemorative texts and paratextual materials such as DVD covers. Given these facts, there is surprising a lack of consideration of how Demy uses his stars' images in existing academic writing on Demy, and existing studies of the stars in question tend to neglect the stars' work with Demy, as I signal in

Chapter 1. This thesis includes analysis of stars like Deneuve, Jeanne Moreau, Marcello Mastroianni and Yves Montand, and how Demy's films reflect critically on their personae.

Most of Demy's work would likely have become unavailable to the public due to technological changes, if it weren't for his personal relationship with Varda. She has dedicated the years since Demy's death to restoring his standing in French film culture and protecting his legacy. Varda has made documentaries about Demy's life and work, curated exhibitions and retrospectives, spoken at film festivals, and overseen restorations of Demy's films. The release in 2008 of the *Intégrale Jacques Demy* by Varda's production company Ciné-Tamaris has given life to a new wave of scholarship on Demy, including this PhD thesis, which would not have been possible without this collection.

It is also true that texts and films by Varda, or produced with her participation, tend to offer a partial account of Demy's cinema which particularly under-emphasises its queer dimensions. In her films *L'Univers de Jacques Demy* and *Les Demoiselles ont eu 25 ans/The Young Girls Turn 25* (1995), Varda situates Demy's legacy in a heterosexual world, and asserts that his films are beloved above all by women and children, two groups generally presumed to be, and here framed as, heterosexual. In a 2014 article, Demy biographer Jean-Pierre Berthomé even accused Varda's production company Ciné-Tamaris of obstructing scholarship and keeping a few films out of the reach of the public, in an effort to control the narrative about Demy (Berthomé 2014b). Varda's work to secure Demy's legacy is of great benefit to fans and scholars, and also embeds a specific and personal set of values in his work, thereby raising questions about memorialisation and authorship.

This thesis is an auteur study, in the simple sense that it studies the cinema of one writer-director. The large number of critical and commemorative texts which speak of a ‘Demy-world’, or a ‘Universe of Jacques Demy’, attest to something that I do not dispute: that there is a great deal of consistency in terms of style, genre, themes and narrative concerns across Demy’s oeuvre. I do not, however, wish to approach Demy as an individual genius, solely responsible for his films’ meaning. One of the main concerns of my thesis is the masculinism of the critical culture into which Demy’s films were released, which tended to only appreciate culture which it could frame as the work of ‘great men’. I have no interest in replicating a critical system which could not deal with the complexity of Demy’s work.

Thus, I focus on a great many things outside of the parameters of a strictly auteurist approach. I have done extensive research into the reception of Demy’s films in both the popular and highbrow presses, in order to draw conclusions about canon formation, and what identities, values and cultural forms the critical culture embraces and which it rejects. I have drawn inspiration from various theoretical frameworks, from camp to genre theory to queer theory, in order to shed light on those aspects of Demy’s practice which mystified contemporary critics. I also extract Demy from the cultural vacuum in which he is often placed, to consider how his films correspond to genres and movements such as French gay cinema, and American genre film.

All of the feature films Demy directed are analysed in this thesis, with the exception of his three commissions: *The Pied Piper*, *Lady Oscar* and *La Naissance du jour*. The fact that Demy took these commissions, as an indication that he spent much of his career working as best he could under serious financial constraints, is more interesting to me than the films themselves. My account of Demy’s career also starts with *Lola* in 1961, and thereby misses out his early short films *Le Sabotier du val de*

Loire (1956), *Le Bel indifférent* (1957) and *Ars* (1958). The thesis hinges in part on analysis of how Demy's films were received and how a narrative about his life and work was constructed over his lifetime. These shorts would not contribute to this thread in my work, as they were barely documented in the press on their release. The films, and their bearing on Demy's later work, have been amply analysed by Darren Waldron (Waldron 2015, 13-20).

My first chapter discusses Demy's New Wave films, *Lola*, *La Baie des anges*, and the short film *La Luxure/Lust* (1962). I do not focus on ways in which Demy's films conform to New Wave aesthetics and thematics, as recent articles by Rodney Hill (2006, 2008, 2016) and Richard Neupert (2016) do. Rather, I have used research into the reception of these films to suggest that these films were excluded from the New Wave canon because of their sentimentality, and their connection to films in genres and styles associated with female audiences. Thus, I hope to challenge the foundations of the New Wave canon. I also study the films for their queer narrative threads, their challenging presentations of masculinity and femininity, and their address to multiple audiences. Thus, I set the scene for a thesis broadly concerned with the connections between genre, gender, sexuality, and cultural value.

My second chapter leads on thematically from my first, as it continues to trace a narrative about Demy being a bad fit for his culture through the years. I analyse *Model Shop* (1968) and *Parking* (1985) as critically and commercially 'failed' films, and also examine their representations of success and failure. Here I engage with recent queer theory which seeks to locate some radical potential in failure. I also introduce, through my study of *Parking*, an openly queer dimension in Demy's later films, and I document the erasure of queer narratives in Demy's films by the straight press.

Chapter 3 considers *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* and *L'Événement* as films which employ camp as a deliberate, politicised aesthetic practice. Camp juxtapositions in these films, between the masculine and the feminine, the serious and the frivolous, and the highbrow and the vulgar, encourage a critical view on these binaries. Both these films also employ camp in order to speak simultaneously to a queer audience and a straight audience.

My final chapter, on the nature of the relationship between Demy's films and the Hollywood melodrama and musical, encompasses many of the issues that I have already discussed: Demy's use of genres with low cultural value because of their association with female audiences; address; and submerged queer narratives. Furthermore, in this chapter I explore how elements of style including colour, music and mise-en-scène express emotion. Following Richard Dyer in *Pastiche*, I argue that Demy's pastiche of Hollywood genre films places his own films within a specific and historicised emotional register, and within a cinematic lineage which includes Hollywood melodramas, women's pictures, and musicals.

Chapter 1: New critical approaches to the Demy problem

In a 2013 essay, Anna Marmiesse accidentally crystallises the problem generations of film critics and scholars have had with the cinema of Jacques Demy. She describes the experience of being touched by a moment of beauty in a film, and being disturbed by the person in the next seat in the cinema laughing at the same moment (Marmiesse 2013, 58). She suggests that Demy's films are especially apt to elicit these two reactions: they are both beautiful and, she argues, easily misapprehended as kitsch because of their play with genres considered low or vulgar; and their excessive, 'mushy' sentimentality (59). What saves them from the sin of kitsch, according to Marmiesse, is their genuine sadness; she finds the same quality in the Hollywood melodramas of Douglas Sirk (60). Marmiesse places kitsch and sadness in opposition, and states that Demy's films might be mistaken for kitsch, but an enlightened viewer knows that they are in fact sad.

Similarly, in his 2015 book on Demy, Darren Waldron sets out to prove that beneath the 'sugary coating' of Demy's films lie 'philosophical reflections on some of the most pressing issues that preoccupy Western societies' (Waldron 2015, 176). This opposition, between the 'philosophical' and the merely 'sugary', draws on a long and problematic discursive history which values the masculine over the feminine, and which has shaped the discourse around Demy since the very start of his career. French critics of Demy's earliest films also insisted that they be either sugary, sentimental and superficial or, despite appearances, philosophical, serious and good. Writers who now invoke binaries such as 'sugary or philosophical' and 'kitsch or sad' are attempting to valorise his film, in a way that cannot help but uphold a flawed hierarchy of values in

which the serious and masculine is at the top, and the whimsical, aesthetic and feminine is at the bottom.

My thesis aims to demonstrate that Demy's films are both kitsch *and* sad; and that the risk of a film spilling over into the mushy and the excessive need not be read as a defect in Demy's films but rather a choice he makes again and again. Recent work by Amy Herzog (2010) and Nancy Virtue (2016) has acknowledged that, due to the hybrid nature of his cinema, scholarly writing on Demy must account for 'the various ways his films seem to occupy two, sometimes multiple, often incongruous spaces or planes' (Virtue 2016, 23). I have been able to do this by using critical tools from Gay and Lesbian or Queer Studies, which account for how a piece of art can include multiple simultaneous narratives, forms of address, and cultural registers, as Demy's films do.

Demy's marginalisation matters because, as Janet Staiger argues in 'The Politics of Film Canons' (1985), film canons reflect the values and preserve the art of a dominant social group. Canon formation presents itself as a neutral and natural process, a matter of selecting exemplary texts to represent an era or a nation, when in fact it is a partial and biased process. I have endeavoured to uncover the biases inherent in canon formation through my study of the reception of Demy's films. My work takes its cue from Geneviève Sellier's *Masculine Singular*, which highlights the biases that underscore both New Wave films and the Parisian cinephile culture of the 1950s and 1960s. This culture was exceptionally masculinist, and privileged male film critics and films by and about men, in genres (thrillers, crime films and so on) aimed at an audience of men. Not only does Sellier's work reflect on the culture in which Demy started his career, but it also provides a framework for an exploration of how questions of gender, genre and cultural value work to uplift certain types of cinema, and disappear others. Through my study of Demy, I have endeavoured to notice who and what is

missing from canons and narratives, and thereby to challenge the structures which uphold social hierarchies, and hierarchies of value.

Authorship

All manner of texts on Demy rely for biographical information on Jean-Pierre Berthomé's very detailed *Jacques Demy: Les racines du rêve* (1982/2014), a biography written with the filmmaker's collaboration. The book is an invaluable source of details about how each of Demy's films was conceived, funded, made and received. Berthomé also describes the many projects Demy was unable to see through. He undertakes analysis of Demy's films and draws out themes and iconography which recur between films, but often leans heavily on biographical explanations for their content. For each of Demy's unloved films, of which there are quite a number, Berthomé constructs a defence, arguing for example that cinemagoers simply weren't ready for a film such as *Model Shop*, or that *L'Événement* was ruined by concessions to the film's Italian producers (Berthomé 2014, 239 & 294). There appears to have been a longstanding personal connection between the author and the subject of the book, which may explain its hagiographic tone.

Published in 1996, Camille Taboulay's *Le Cinéma enchanté de Jacques Demy* uses Demy's archives, made available to her by his family after his death, to weave together biography and analysis. She usefully highlights how his cinematic influences and tastes make themselves known within his films, tracing links between films by Robert Bresson, Jean Cocteau, Max Ophuls, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, and others, and Demy's own work. One very long central chapter describes every aspect of Demy's filmmaking practice, from script writing to the development of characters to his team of

regular collaborators, using interviews with Varda and his colleagues, and early versions of his scripts. Taboulay also emphasises a number of Demy's thematic preoccupations: childhood and parenthood; the theatre; and what she calls 'the clash between dreams and reality', although what she means by each of these terms is not sufficiently explained (Taboulay 1996, 47). There is not a great deal of textual analysis in Taboulay's work, and it is very rooted in the personal, aiming above all to pay tribute to Demy as an artist and a man and explicitly motivated by a deep love of his films (6).

Olivier Père's *Jacques Demy* (2010) is also explicitly commemorative. It is not a critical text, and is mostly made up of large images: publicity materials, photographs from set, and stills from films. It goes through Demy's films chronologically, dedicating a few paragraphs of mostly laudatory analysis to each. Inside back cover are five postcards written in 2010 by Agnès Varda to Demy, and addressed to the Montparnasse cemetery where he is buried. The postcards describe trips she has taken, relate memories of their time together, and connect both to details from Demy's films. This text can be seen to participate in Varda's continuing efforts to memorialise Demy, and their personal relationship, after his death.

After the release of the *Intégrale Jacques Demy* in 2008, scholarly texts on Demy began to be published in greater numbers. The first full-length critical book on Demy's cinema in English was Anne E. Duggan's *Queer Enchantments: The Fairy-Tale Cinema of Jacques Demy* (2013). Duggan describes Demy as 'a queer director with working class roots', and her book explores the queer sensibility of Demy's films through his engagement with fairy-tale narratives, arguing that they subvert binary notions of sexuality, gender and class and well as disrupting the conventions of the genres on which they draw (4). Duggan's corpus includes two of Demy's commissions, *The Pied Piper* and *Lady Oscar*, as well as *Peau d'âne*, *Lola* and *Les Parapluies de*

Cherbourg. Duggan discusses many issues which are pertinent to my study, including melodrama and camp. She does all of this, however, within the framework of fairy-tale studies: her arguments tend to point back to how Demy's films, in their treatment of gender, sexuality and class, reconfigure fairy-tale narratives. We thus have different focuses.

Darren Waldron's 2015 book on Demy has a similar corpus to my thesis. Waldron analyses every one of Demy's films, including his early shorts and commissions, 'through a perspective grounded in pre- and post-war philosophies on time and alterity, and their application in work on film' (Waldron 2015, 2). Throughout the text, Waldron refers to philosophical work by French thinkers including Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Emmanuel Levinas, Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze, and others including Judith Butler, José Esteban Muñoz and Sara Ahmed, in order to think through how Demy's films approach questions of perception and temporality, subjectivity, alterity, gender and sexuality.

Waldron's work contains many valuable observations which have informed my own work. He emphasises how the high stylisation of Demy's films suggests characters' subjective impressions of the world around them (9); addresses the queer temporality of Demy's films created by an emphasis on memory, the (imperfect) doubling of characters within and between films, and intertextual references (142-143); and describes how Demy's films are camp and produce critical gaps between masculinity, femininity, heterosexuality, and the self through the interplay of authenticity and theatricality (69-70). His existential framework, however, occasionally appears limiting, for example when it is used to draw conclusions about whether or not characters are 'free' or have 'agency' (58, 128). Furthermore, as I have argued above, Waldron's stated aim—to show that beneath the 'sugary' surface of Demy's films lie

‘philosophical reflections on some of the most pressing issues that preoccupy Western societies’—can be read as an apology for the aspects of Demy’s film which may have seen him marginalised in French film studies in the first place. I have used close analysis to make Demy’s ‘sugary’ visual and musical style the starting point from which I make my arguments, rather than viewing it as a ‘surface’. By using a number of critical frameworks, as well as archival research and close analysis, I have been able to come to what I believe are more broad-ranging conclusions about Demy’s cinema.

The moderate body of scholarship that now exists on Demy remains clustered around his most successful films. For example, there are several books of different kinds on *Les Parapluies* in French. Jean-Pierre Berthomé published a critical study of the film in 1995; Laurent Jullier’s *L’Abécédaire des Parapluies de Cherbourg* (2007) arranges various observations on the film into a playful ABC format; and in a series of books on the years of the Cannes Film Festival, Gérard Pagnon and Camille Taboulay authored the 1964 volume on *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*. This book includes a historical account of that year’s festival, photographs, and a description of how the film was made, and the positive and negative effects it had on the rest of Demy’s career. There remains a critical tendency to approach Demy films as singularities, rich enough to merit study on their own but odd as to have no connection to their broader cinematic culture. My thesis seeks to correct this by considering Demy’s films as part of national or transnational cinematic cultures, even if they have not been acknowledged as such by existing studies.

Genre

Scholars writing about Demy's approach to genre have largely focused on highlighting similarities and differences between Demy's films and Hollywood genre films. They have also tended to frame him above all as a maker of musicals. Diane Henneton (2012), for example, compares *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* and *Trois places pour le 26* to Hollywood backstage musicals, and argues that these films represent 'an insertion into this codified genre and...a distancing from it' (Henneton 2012, 222). In other words, Henneton argues that these backstage musicals mimic some of the tropes and structures of the Hollywood musical—such as the musical's characteristic relationship between music and sound—while critically remaking others. Like Henneton, Waldron argues that Demy's relationship to the musical is one of similarities and differences. He writes, 'Demy reconfigures the classical musical in order to convey...his concerns and preoccupations, mainly around subjectivity and affect' (Waldron 2015, 49).

Like Henneton, I examine *Trois places* as a backstage musical, albeit a strange one, and my definition of the genre comes from Jane Feuer's *The Hollywood Musical*. Feuer's book sees the conventions of a backstage musical as ways of disavowing the labour and technology that go into making a musical, and thereby denying that musicals are made by paid entertainers, to profit large corporations. Feuer details many of the conventions which allow musicals to achieve this. She also considers the temporality of the musical, a genre which appears to continually innovate and reflect on its own conventions, but is also conservative in that it always ultimately returns to a celebration of the genre itself.

My work on the musical has also been informed by Rick Altman's *The American Film Musical*. Altman argues that musicals tend to have a 'dual-focus narrative', in which the male and female character are depicted in paired segments in order to create parallels between them. The man and woman are presented as opposites, and their opposition may be constructed on 'colour, costume, age, background, national origin, size, attitude, profession, competence, manners' (Altman 1989, 33). Their eventual marriage reconciles their differences, and the musical thus solves as a 'cultural problem-solving device' which can smooth out ideological conflicts (27). Demy's musicals evidence an awareness of this model, but they deviate from it significantly, as I discuss in my third chapter.

The relationship between Demy's films and Hollywood melodramas feels less obvious, and has certainly been discussed less. This may be because, whereas musicals are very easily identified by their use of diegetic song, melodrama is both a less self-evident and a more pervasive mode. Where scholars have discussed Demy's debt to melodrama, it has mostly been in reference to its narratives. The most sustained discussion of Demy's films as melodramas that I am aware of is a chapter in Duggan's *Queer Enchantments*, which argues that *Lola* and *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* mobilise 'a dialectic between the utopian promises of the fairy tale and the irrecoverable loss characteristic of melodrama to create films of disillusionment' (Duggan 2013, 15). The main quality of melodrama which Duggan (citing Tanio Modleski) identifies is its depiction of the 'experience of loss', which in these films disrupts a fairy-tale narrative which promises a happy ending. She also notes that, like the two Demy films, melodramas often involve women waiting. I am also interested in the narrative characteristics of melodrama, including the genre's depictions of loss and waiting. More than this, however, I am interested in how Demy's films employ the styles and affects

of melodrama. In my fourth chapter, I explore how colour, mise-en-scène and music express intense emotion in *Les Parapluies* and *Une chambre en ville*.

My own approach to Demy's relationship with Hollywood genres more broadly seeks to go beyond making comparisons or outlining differences and modifications. My questions are: what is the nature of the relationship between Demy's films and their Hollywood antecedents? What are the aesthetic and emotional effects of his use of Hollywood intertexts? How does his citational practice differ from that of other French directors who have been inspired by Hollywood, such as Jean-Luc Godard? Richard Dyer's *Pastiche* has helped me answer these questions. Dyer argues that pastiche in film, rather than always being deconstructive and distancing, is often a way of historicising the emotion the viewer feels while watching a film. By mimicking the aesthetics of, for example, the 1950s Hollywood family melodrama, a film can move the viewer while encouraging an awareness that their being moved is the result of historical patterns of representations. Thus, the film can 'enable us to reflect on the fact that how we feel right now is itself framed by the traditions of feeling we inherit, mobilise and hand on' (Dyer 2007, 178).

Stardom

Demy's manipulations of the personae of his stars often highlight tensions in the version of masculinity or femininity the star is seen to inhabit. Demy worked with some of the most famous, and studied, actors to work in France, including Anouk Aimée, Jeanne Moreau, Catherine Deneuve, Gene Kelly, Danielle Darrieux, Marcello Mastroianni, Jean Marais, and Yves Montand. Curiously, however, his films starring these actors are rarely analysed in studies of the stars in question. This may be in part

because some are considered minor films which were seen by small audiences. I also suspect that some do not feature because they are outliers, and would present a problem to the images of the stars that these studies are trying to establish.

The construction of the character of Jackie (Jeanne Moreau) in *La Baie des Anges*, for example, is a direct contradiction of the image of Moreau that Ginette Vincendeau and Geneviève Sellier, separately, describe. Vincendeau argues that Moreau, in her New Wave films, was made to represent ‘the ideal woman of the modern intellectual bourgeoisie’, typically styled with ‘unflashy but beautifully cut’ clothes, discreet make-up, and tidy hair (Vincendeau 2002, 125). Sellier’s chapter on Moreau in *Masculine Singular* writes that Moreau was associated in the press with authenticity (Sellier 2008, 185-188). The restraint, intellectualism and authenticity with which Moreau was associated are completely disregarded by Demy in the construction of Jackie, who incarnates an artificial femininity self-consciously put together through constraining, glamorous clothes, thick make-up and bleached blonde hair. Thus, Demy’s use of Moreau’s persona in *La Baie des Anges* reflects critically on the idea of ‘natural’ or ‘authentic’ womanhood.

Catherine Deneuve’s role in *Les Parapluies* was vital to establishing her early image as a ‘well-behaved, essentially bourgeois girl’, which was later modified and subverted by directors such as Polanski and Buñuel, and even by Demy in *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* (Vincendeau 2002, 200). Susan Weiner argues that *Peau d’âne* also mobilises this combination of sexual purity and perversion, with Deneuve as a princess who is tempted by her father’s offer of marriage (2007). The one Demy-Deneuve collaboration which is not discussed in any study of the star is *L’Événement*. This film provides an interesting commentary on Deneuve and Marcello Mastroianni’s association with European art film and high fashion, by casting them in in a light

domestic comedy. Deneuve's role as the unassuming owner of a hair salon, and her kitsch costuming and big hair styles, see her represent, unusually, a sort of 'ordinary' domestic femininity.

Mastroianni's role in the film as a driving instructor and father who gets pregnant by his wife is, surprisingly, quite consonant with the specific type of masculinity he usually incarnates, according to Jacqueline Reich. Reich's book *Beyond the Latin Lover* (2004) provides some very important cultural context for Mastroianni's role in Demy's film. His well-publicised relationships with women, and his association with fashionable Italian menswear, lent themselves to his typecasting outside of Italy as a 'Latin Lover'. Simultaneously, however, Reich's introduction argues that Mastroianni is typically cast as an *inetto*: a weak, impotent or feminised man, at odds with his culture, who articulates the instability of Italian masculinity (Reich 2004, 6-9). Thus, Demy's casting of the famously handsome, well-dressed and romantically successful Mastroianni in the role of a 'feminised' pregnant man is less incongruous than it may appear.

Contemporary press coverage of *Trois places pour le 26* tended to frame it as an Yves Montand film, rather than a Jacques Demy film, and accept even the fictional parts of the story as a plausible representations of Montand's life. This is because the image of Montand which the constructs is perfectly consonant with the image that the filmmaker promoted in his publicity interviews, and the one set out in biographies by Monserrat (1982), Cannavo and Quinquéré (1981), and Pascuito (1992), and a book by his last partner, Carole Amiel (1997). These narratives about Montand locate his masculinity in his origins as a son of Italian immigrants, who started work in a pasta factory at 11, and in his fabled relationships with women. *Trois places* does exactly the

same. It would seem that Montand's legend is too deeply embedded in French culture, and too steadfastly heterosexual and patriarchal, to be subverted.

In contrast, in *Les Demoiselles*, Demy is playful with Gene Kelly's image. Steven Cohan documents how Kelly's 'average' American masculinity was expressly constructed as a defence against the perception that dancing was an effeminate activity. His dance style was athletic, and in interviews he would often make statements to the effect that he was a 'normal' family man, who liked sports (Cohan 2006, 152-159). *Les Demoiselles* is a highly citational film, and Kelly's role is small and constructed largely through references to his MGM musicals. The overall effect of this is that Andy Miller's character feels extremely flimsy, and his masculinity seems to be the cumulative effect of various bits of performance. Alongside Kelly, *Les Demoiselles* stars two other American actors and dancers: George Chakiris and Grover Dale, who were known for their roles in *West Side Story* (Jerome Robbins and Tim Wise, 1961). In a 2008 article, Svea Becker and Bruce Williams analyse the dancing in *Les Demoiselles* closely, and comment upon what its dance styles and its 'celebrity intertexts' (Kelly, Chakiris and Dale) bring to its presentation of gender and sexuality.

Emotion and style

A great deal of my argument hinges on the idea that elements of style, such as colour, décor, music, camera movement and mise-en-scène, are the tools with which Demy expresses emotion in his films, beyond what can be expressed in dialogue. In part, I am following the lead of the auteurist critics of melodrama. While I am critical of the detached and masculinist approach of writers like Andrew Sarris and Thomas Elsaesser, I use their methods in order to uncover how mise-en-scène, colour and music

express intense emotion and help to tell the story in films such as *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Une chambre en ville*.

Analysis of colour is a facet of the mise-en-scène analysis I perform. I see colour in Demy's films as part of a relational system, which carries narrative meaning and can be systematically interpreted. A similar type of analysis is performed by Mary Beth Haralovich in an essay on *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1954), and Marshall Deutelbaum in an essay on *Leave Her to Heaven* (John Stahl, 1945). On Demy, there are no such analyses in existence, and only two critical texts so far examine Demy's use of colour, both about *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*. One is a comparison between the uses of colour in *Les Parapluies* and *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952), in Paul Coates' *Cinema and Colour* (2010). The small section is written in rather obscure language, such that it is difficult to say what conclusions the writer comes to. It does not, in any case, attempt a systematic analysis of the colours in either film. Steven Peacock's chapter on *Les Parapluies* is much clearer, and it approaches the colours of the film as 'abstract and non-figurative', rather than representational (Peacock 2010, 92). He describes how the colours of *Les Parapluies* 'often slip out of synchronicity with the story', and instead harmonise with one another (94). This is effectively the opposite of my own argument.

Although Demy's cinema is known for its music, there are only a small number of texts which analyse that music in detail. The most sustained study of Demy's music is by Raphaël Lefèvre, in a book on *Une chambre en ville* which takes music as its focus. Lefèvre places the film within the history of musical entertainment, from French and Italian popular opera to the Hollywood musical. He also considers the effect of sung dialogue, and analyses the film's different musical themes. Lefèvre's book is a valuable contribution to a body of scholarship which, overall, has not analysed this crucial aspect

of Demy's work in detail, possibly because many scholars of film (myself included) do not have the skills to undertake significant musicological analysis.

There are two recent articles which approach Demy's music through an engagement with French philosophy on time. In 'Time, History and Memory in *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*' (2002), Sylvie Lindeperg and Bill Marshall discuss the function of music, as it relates to a Bergsonian conception of time as 'duration' in *Les Parapluies*. Being one continuous piece, with themes that disappear and reappear, this piece of music 'is able to juxtapose past and present, recall the past in the present, anticipate the future...', and give an account of the passage of time tending towards loss rather than completion (Lindeperg and Marshall 2000, 103). Amy Herzog draws on Lindeperg and Marshall's analysis of Bergsonian time in Demy's films in her chapter on Demy in *Dreams of Difference, Songs of the Same* (2010). Herzog refers to theory on time by Bergson and Deleuze to argue that Demy's musical films, because they are structured by visual and musical repetitions and doublings, undermine linear narrative progress, including the character's trajectory towards heterosexual union, and static notions of identity. The conclusions these texts come to about time, memory, repetition and loss resonate with my own understanding. I see myself doing a different kind of work, however. Herzog's chapter spends several pages explaining the Bergsonian conception of time, for example, using several diagrams (Herzog 2010, 121-126). Her reflections on the Demy film are pinned to this theory, when I believe they could have been made without it.

My own writing on Demy's music draws on Suzanne K. Langer's arguments in *Feeling and Form*. Langer argues that music is moving because it mimics the forms of human emotion: 'growth and of attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy

lapses—not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both—the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt’ (Langer 1953, 27). I have analysed the music of *Les Parapluies*’ sung dialogue through this lens: I believe its melodies, as well as its words, are moving, because they suggest emotion non-representationally.

Queer and feminist methodologies

I believe that Demy’s lack of consistent success and outsider status point the way to more fruitful critical approaches to his films. From the first days of his career, Demy was marked as an outsider because his films did not have the imposing male heterosexual perspective of films by other New Wave directors, and were in genres associated with women. Accordingly, I have borrowed critical frameworks from gay and lesbian, queer and feminist film studies in order to illuminate Demy’s practice. I also perform close analysis of Demy’s films, focusing on elements which I believe contribute to their meanings and emotional registers: music, colour, décor, mise-en-scene, and their relationship to emotion.

Feminism against the canon

What is feminist about Jacques Demy’s cinema? I am not arguing that Demy’s films openly militate for women’s liberation, which by and large they do not. It is true that they do not have the crass sexism of the films of Demy’s New Wave contemporaries, and my thesis highlights moments when Demy’s direction strives to convey women’s subjective experiences and depict their social lives together instead of

flattening and objectifying them. My primary meaning, however, when I say that Demy's film is feminist, is that they draw on genres that tend to attract disrespect from the critical establishment because they are associated with female (or gay male) audiences. Through his citational practice, Demy places his films in a lineage which includes French and American women's films, melodramas and musicals; love stories, weepies, and heritage films. His films demonstrate a love of and a respect for women's mass culture that was punished by a masculinist critical establishment.

Duggan has already, briefly, considered how questions of gender, genre and cultural value have affected the fortunes of Demy's films. The introduction *Queer Enchantments* helpfully draws together issues of camp, genre and gender. Citing Sellier, she emphasises that Demy's New Wave contemporaries made films in genres typically 'addressed to a masculine public or constructed for a masculine gaze' (Sellier 2008, 28), such as the thriller, the Western, and science fiction. In contrast, Demy was drawn to the fairy-tale and the musical, genres which are 'gendered as feminine' or which are considered camp (Duggan 2013, 5). What is only a comment in Duggan's work is one of the most important elements in my investigation of Demy's use of genres and his marginalisation in French film studies.

The fact that Demy's films tend not to be attributed to any particular movement, but rather described as singularities, is not necessarily the result of their being singular, but rather because the film trends to which they may conform have historically not been acknowledged by French film scholars. *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Une chambre en ville*, for example, would fit well in studies of French melodrama; *La Naissance d'un jour* in studies of the biopic; *Peau d'âne* in studies of children's films. As Raphaëlle Moine argues in *Le Cinéma français face aux genres* (2005), however, French film criticism has tended to disdain genre film, and so such books do not exist in large

numbers. Demy also presents a particular difficulty because he is considered to straddle the boundary between *auteur* film and popular film. He was rejected from books on the New Wave because he seemed to make ‘unclassifiable’ films with melodramatic leanings; but he also worked as an auteur, as a writer-director with a small and consistent team, so he might not fit well with a book about films with a more conventional production context. Part of my task has been to understand Demy’s status as unclassifiable, as belonging between categories, as a productive way of thinking through problems relating to genre, cultural value, and critical orthodoxy.

As I have argued above, canon formation is a process of exclusion which reflects dominant ideologies including the valorisation of the masculine over the feminine, and the New Wave canon is exemplary. My first chapter narrates the process by which the earliest scholars of the French New Wave wrote Demy, as well as other filmmakers who did not write for the *Cahiers du cinéma*, out of the movement. While the press in the early 1960s did consider Demy a New Wave filmmaker, the first wave of academic criticism figured Demy as an outsider and an oddity, and focused almost exclusively on the filmmaker-critics who wrote for *Cahiers du cinéma* and whose films were, by and large, masculine, sexist, and unsentimental. Early academic studies, such as Peter Graham’s 1968 anthology of writing on the New Wave, Peter Monaco’s *New Wave*, and Claire Clouzot’s *Le Cinéma français depuis la nouvelle vague*, establish a very narrow canon: Monaco even warns that ‘For the purposes of this book... ‘New Wave’ means simply ‘Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette’; he later reassures the reader that he also intends to publish an article on Alain Resnais (Monaco 1976, vi & viii). There are already hints in each of these texts as to why Demy might not qualify as a New Wave filmmaker, which suggest something amiss in terms of gender and sexuality: François Truffaut, in a piece in the Graham anthology, says he makes ‘over-

melodramatic melodrama' and has a 'perverse sense of refinement'; Clouzot notes that his films have been criticised for their 'lightness' (Graham 1968, 102; Clouzot 1972, 150).

More recent revisionist works on the New Wave have proposed to expand the New Wave canon constructed in these early texts, but it is not clear that they have done so. They tend to focus on the same five filmmaker-critics, and the so-called Left Bank Group, a split which does not accommodate Demy. Richard Neupert's *A History of the French New Wave Cinema* (2002) lists Demy as a Left Bank filmmaker alongside Agnès Varda, Alain Resnais, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Chris Marker, yet Demy barely features in the chapter on the Left Bank Group added for the 2002 second edition of the text. In fact throughout the text, Demy is mentioned only to help Neupert describe the work of other filmmakers, or because of his personal relationship with Agnès Varda. Other recent texts which attempt to expand the canon have the same blind spot, including Michel Marie's *The French New Wave: An Artistic School* (2009), Naomi Greene's *The French New Wave: A New Look*, Antoine de Baecque's *La Nouvelle Vague: Portrait d'un jeunesse* (2009), Jean Douchet's *Nouvelle Vague* (2009). These all make conspicuous attempts to deviate from canonical descriptions of the New Wave, yet they all work with a very similar canon. Some are even more blunt: Alan Williams' history of French cinema, for example, praises Demy for his 'quixotic efforts', and remarks that his film is 'odd' (Williams 1992, 361).

Several recent articles make a case for Demy's place in the New Wave. Two are by Rodney Hill: 'Demy Monde: Jacques Demy and the French New Wave' (2008) and 'The New Wave Meets the Tradition of Quality: Jacques Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*' (2008b). In both of these articles, Hill argues that Demy's first three features are New Wave films, since they share many of the formal characteristics of the

New Wave. In the latter he argues that *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* has typical qualities of both the New Wave, and the Tradition of Quality, and seeks to complicate popular understandings of both schools. Similarly, Richard Neupert's 2016 article 'Jacques Demy's *Bay of Angels*: A New Wave Mode of Production' describes how *La Baie des Anges* was made, and argues that 'the film proves that he is a key figure for the wave of new French cinema of the 1960s' (Neupert 2016, 14). I do not disagree with any of these writers' conclusions, but my own work seeks to undermine the foundations of the New Wave canon, rather than making room in that canon for Demy.

I have drawn on the work of various scholars of melodrama and women's films in order to frame my argument about Demy's use of women's genres. Christine Gledhill's introduction to *Home Is Where The Heart Is* (1987) is a particularly insightful history of the standing of melodrama within film studies. She charts critical attitudes to melodramatic culture, from the late 19th century, when it was 'constituted as the anti-value for a critical field in which tragedy and realism became cornerstones of 'high' cultural value', through the 'rediscovery' of certain Hollywood melodramas by auteurist critics (Gledhill 1987, 5).

I am interested in the implicit masculinism of melodrama scholarship by critics such as Andrew Sarris (1968), Thomas Elsaesser (1972), and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1977). Their approach to the melodramas of Douglas Sirk, Vincente Minnelli and others has parallels with the reception of Demy's films by a masculinist critical establishment. These texts from the 1960s and 1970s tend to denigrate or ignore the narratives of American family melodramas, and their roots in forms of women's culture, and argue for their importance based only on their aesthetics. This is the same tendency Sellier criticises the men of the New Wave, in whose writing she perceives a 'fear of confusion between mass culture and elite culture' (15). *Mise-en-scène* criticism allowed

these critics to write about American popular films while distinguishing themselves from a popular audience. Their writing removed films from their socio-political contexts, a practice Sellier describes as ‘individualist, elitist, and masculine’ (23).

I am indebted to the work of feminist scholars of the melodrama and the women’s film. Pam Cook (1991), Jeanine Basinger (1993), Mary Ann Doane (1987), and others, valorised and studied films in which male critics were only interested if they could be shown to be ironic. Feminist scholars considered the appeal that films in women’s genres made to their audience, through their narratives and their construction of a feminine subjectivity. They also have a consciousness of how gender intersects with cultural value, which I have tried to replicate. Demy’s films are clearly descendants of the Hollywood women’s film, which, also, focus on ‘the unhappiness of women’, and depict ‘female desire and a female point-of-view’, as Demy’s do (Basinger 1993, 7; Cook 1991, 251). Demy’s films, like women’s pictures, also challenge the theoretical commonplace in film studies that spectatorship is masculine. Doane lists some of the compelling figures of women’s films as ‘the unwed mother, the waiting wife, the abandoned mistress, the frightened newlywed or the anguished mother’ (Doane 1987, 3). Demy’s films, similarly populated by a succession of abandoned, waiting and anguished women, also privilege women’s perspectives, and tell stories about women, and the contemporary reception of his films indicates that his career suffered for it.

Queer studies

Demy’s films are broadly and insistently anti-normative in their presentation of desire and relationships, family, time, work, and gendered embodiment. They address,

and are beloved by, multiple audiences. From writing on camp in the 1970s and 1980s to contemporary queer theory, Gay and Lesbian or Queer Studies have provided critical tools for understanding these key aspects of Demy's cinema.

Camp is a particularly appropriate approach to Demy's films because scholars of camp tend to eschew binary thinking, and locate camp as a sensibility in the overlap between different categories. Drawing on the work of scholars of camp such as Richard Dyer and Jack Babuscio, I have tried to identify and politicise the camp of Demy's films as a specifically queer aesthetic, a strategy to address a film to multiple audiences, and a means of denaturalising binary gender and heterosexuality. The stakes of my interest in Demy's camp are expressed in this set of questions from David Bergman's introduction to the anthology *Camp Grounds* (1993): 'How does one speak to a double audience? How does one dramatize one's sexual role and in so doing simultaneously make it apparent and call it into question? [...] How can the oppressed speak?' (Bergman 1993, 10).

Jack Babuscio emphasises that camp is not merely a style, detached from people's material conditions of life, but rather springs from gay people's oppression. The camp sensibility, a sense of 'life as theatre', originates in a heightened awareness of the superficial nature of gender and sexual roles, and is practiced by people who are skilled at 'passing' and impersonation (Babuscio 1993, 25). Babuscio's description of camp illuminates films such as *La Baie des Anges*, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* and *L'Événement*, which cast heterosexual relationships as an exercise in fitting into a well-worn mould, and use costumes, wigs and make-up to draw more attention than necessary to the construction of gender. Rather than mere 'kitsch', the camp of Demy's films is a reflection of the artifice and risk that may be involved in life as a member of a sexual minority, and of a consciousness of the constructed nature of sexual roles.

In an essay on Judy Garland's appeal to gay men, Richard Dyer emphasises that the gay sensibility 'holds together qualities that are elsewhere felt as antithetical': intensity and irony (Dyer 1987, 150). Garland's appeal stems partly from the perception that her performances, while often exaggerated or self-deprecating, also conveyed real emotion, a perception aided by public knowledge about Garland's personal struggles. They sit on 'the knife edge between camp and hurt', Dyer argues, and the same can be said of Demy's films: they have extravagantly artificial and distancing aesthetics, such as sung dialogue, and yet they are often intensely sad.

Steven Cohan's historical writing on camp and the MGM musical in *Incongruous Entertainment* casts camp as a subcultural idiom which, in Hollywood's studio era, allowed people to identify and communicate with one another through supposedly heterosexual mass culture. I am not able to make statements about intentionality, as Cohan does based on known facts about the sexual identities and communities of MGM's Freed Unit. Like Cohan, however, I see camp as a means of addressing a film to multiple audiences: a straight audience, who would have taken a musical's heterosexual love story at face value; and a queer one, who would have accessed a different and equally valid set of meanings, through the codes of camp.

Some texts on Demy's cinema also engage with similar questions of address, and with the appeal Demy's cinema holds for queer audiences. They imply that there are several different fan communities around Demy's films, all of whom read the films differently. An early contribution to academic studies of Demy as a queer director is Philippe Colomb's 1998 essay 'L'Étrange Demy-monde'. Colomb asserts that there is a considerable gay fan culture around Demy's films, and that gay audiences have their own ways of understanding the films. *Les Parapluies*, according to Colomb, is significant to this audience because its narrative of secret, impossible love is easily

interpreted as a narrative about the closet (Colomb 1998, 40). In *Les Demoiselles*, he identifies alternative ‘homosexualised’ couples (such as Bill and Etienne) who are more plausible as couples than the film’s heterosexual pairings (44-45). I am indebted to Colomb’s analysis, because it demonstrates that different communities will have different ways of seeing films, down to their very narratives. Nick Rees-Roberts also alludes to a gay fan culture and interpretative community: he cites *Les Demoiselles* as an example of a film which has its own meaning for queer audiences, and comments that the twins Delphine and Solange are ‘camp icons’ (109). His main engagement with Demy is as an influence on recent films by French gay male directors such as François Ozon, Christophe Honoré and Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau. These scholars do not cite any specific source for their comments about fan cultures around Demy; if there is documentation of them, it is unlikely to have been archived comprehensively, and I have not been able to find it. My work focuses not on the audiences and fan communities, but on how the films themselves create multiple modes of address and envisage multiple audiences for themselves.

When I identify what to me are clearly queer narrative threads in Demy’s films, I see myself undertaking the same kind of work as Alexander Doty in *Making Things Perfectly Queer*: highlighting what is queer in elements of mass culture that may appear to be straight because they depict straight relationships or do not depict queer ones. Doty argues that queer readings are not ‘alternative’: addressing ‘straight culture’, he writes, ‘your readings of texts are usually ‘alternative’ ones for me, and they often seem like desperate attempts to deny the queerness that is so clearly a part of mass culture’ (Doty 1993, 24). Demy’s films offer themselves up very readily to queer viewing practices because they often include same-gender pairs whose relationship is plausibly romantic, and present heterosexual relationships as as a matter of people slotting

themselves into pre-existing roles. Following Richard Dyer's 'Heterosexuality', I approach heterosexuality as an ideological construct, which makes claims about men and women and the nature of their relationships, and is constructed in culture through various conventions of representation. Demy's films denaturalise heterosexuality, by being attentive to its construction, and emphasising it as a structure rather than a natural state.

As well as paying attention to the queerness of Demy's ostensibly heterosexual films, I have emphasised that Demy did make openly queer films, featuring queer and gender non-conforming characters, which have not been acknowledged by existing studies of French queer or gay film. This is a facet of my concern with canon formation, and with who or what is omitted in order to present a coherent version of film history. Demy's omission from the canon reveals that the body of French gay or queer films is likely much bigger and less cohesive than is currently imagined. Currently, two rather similar texts sketch out the history of the representation of gay men and, to a lesser extent lesbians and bisexuals, in French film: *L'Homosexualité dans le cinéma français* (2007), by Alain Brassart, and *Le Cinéma français et l'homosexualité* (2008) by Anne Delabre and Didier Roth-Bettoni. Brassart's book moves chronologically through the twentieth century, while Delabre and Roth-Bettoni's is organised in thematic chapters, but each of these texts constructs a similar narrative about gay French film. They chart progress between early implicit representations, through explicit but largely negative representations, and through the AIDS crisis, to the contemporary era, in which gay characters are depicted 'like everyone else' (Delabre & Roth-Bettoni, 271). Demy features in these texts as a filmmaker whose work is loved by gay people, or contains furtive gay narratives, perceptible only to the trained eye. Films such as *Parking* and *L'Événement*, which include open queer desire and gender non-conformity, but have

somewhat confused narratives and were seen by small audiences, are not considered in these studies, as to consider them would disturb this progress narrative.

Demy's explicitly queer films have received very little attention from scholars, and there is a tendency for the work that does exist to ground itself in biography. For example, in a recent article, Rodney F. Hill describes *L'Événement* as 'the beginning of a kind of cinematic 'coming out' for Demy' (Hill 2014, 54). Hill notes that the film has several 'sexually ambiguous or gender-bending characters', and envisages a world 'where single parenthood, gender-fluidity, and bisexuality are accepted non-judgementally'. The framing of Hill's argument is odd, however: he sets out to 'broaden our understanding of the [New Wave] and of Demy's place within it', through his study of *L'Événement*. His argument that *L'Événement* is a work of personal expression relies on biographical details about Demy's sexuality and his relationship with Varda. I have endeavoured to avoid this sort of biographical approach. Furthermore, I see nothing to be gained from expanding the definition of the New Wave such that it encompasses any film made by one of a large group of people, from the late 1950s until the present day. My own writing on *L'Événement* engages with French transgender history, and performs more close analysis of the film, in order to argue that it uses the codes of camp to reflect upon its socio-political moment.

In recent years there have been a number of queer theory texts published about bad feelings, and I am particularly influenced by two: Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure*, and Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness*. Halberstam defends failure, which he says 'allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behaviour and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods' (Halberstam 2011, 3). Where Halberstam analyses cultural texts which depict failure, I wish consider the commercial and artistic failure of

certain Demy films, keeping in mind that the culture within which he failed is capitalist, masculinist and heterosexist. Ahmed, meanwhile, critiques the idea of happiness in *The Promise of Happiness*, and considers what kinds of choices and lives this idea orients us towards. In focusing on figures such as the ‘feminist killjoy’ and the ‘unhappy queer’, Ahmed argues that not being made happy by that which is supposed to make you happy is a form of resistance. In this light, the sadness with which Demy invests heterosexual relationships becomes political.

Now that almost all of Demy’s filmography is available, and a critical mass of scholars have acknowledged his films as the work of a queer director, the task of understanding his place in French film culture begins in earnest. I have chosen to base my investigation, partly, on archival research into the contemporary reception of Demy’s films. This has allowed me to trace the formation of narratives about Demy as a queerly-marked outsider, which as we shall see started in the early years of his career, during the time of the French New Wave.

Chapter 2: Demy and the New Wave

James Monaco's *New Wave*, one of the earliest critical texts on the French New Wave in English, opens with a description of an imagined film about the early years of the movement. Monaco describes the filmmakers and *Cahiers du cinéma* critics Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer as five boys sitting together at a screening at the Cinémathèque française. Instead of naming the five filmmakers Monaco gives small details—Godard's tinted glasses, Truffaut's resemblance to Jean-Pierre Léaud, Rivette's 'provincial look that lets us know immediately that he is not from Paris'—to elicit the reader to use their assumed knowledge of what these men looked like to work out who is who (Monaco 1976, 3-4). Monaco describes these characters returning day after day, getting to know one another, discovering that they all want to make films, and each starting to write for *Cahiers du cinéma*.

Monaco's book represents a foundational moment in the history of New Wave scholarship, one which fixes the New Wave canon into a formation which has rarely been effectively challenged. His fictionalised account of the genesis of the New Wave grounds the whole movement in a moment of sociability between five young men. The picture he paints of boys at the cinema recalls Geneviève Sellier's criticism in *Masculine Singular* of the cinephile culture of the *Cahiers* group, which takes the 'privileged social form' of the 'band of boys', bonding over a love of films (Sellier 2008, 28). Many books about the New Wave and the social life surrounding it follow in this tradition: they uncritically emphasise male heterosexuality as a key dimension of the cinephile culture shared by the *Cahiers* critics Monaco studies. They are about the

men of the New Wave, and their shared love of films by men, about men and implicitly for men, in which women function as a shared object of fascination. They will often feature text and photos which celebrate the beauty of New Wave actresses or the Hollywood pinups preferred by the *Cahiers* critics. Even a critical text as recent as Antoine de Baecque's *Nouvelle vague: portrait d'un jeunesse* (2009) lists women, alongside colour and 'exotic plots', as one of the major attractions of the cinema for young French people in the 1950s, inadvertently or otherwise excluding from this account of Parisian cinephile activity people for whom women are not an attraction (de Baecque 2009, 71)¹.

Jacques Demy is one of a large number of filmmakers who was in the social circle Monaco describes, but did not make it into his 'film' about boys at the cinema. In her biography of Demy, Camille Taboulay describes the filmmaker's social life with the *Cahiers* critics after they met at the 1956 Tours short film festival. She clearly aims to evoke a similar image of sociability among men and around films: 'According to an unchanging ritual, he met them at 7 pm in the little *Cahiers* local in the same building as the Georges V cinema. They would get something cheap to eat at the infamous La Pergona, then they would see two films' (Taboulay 1996, 19). It seems that Demy could have easily been included in descriptions of the social life of the *Cahiers* critics like Monaco's, but was not; and his films could have been included in the New Wave canon Monaco establishes, but were not.

My research into the New Wave writing of the early 1960s has indicated that, at this time, Demy was considered a New Wave filmmaker. Contemporary definitions of

¹ De Baecque makes a similar remark in *La Cinéphilie: Invention d'un regard, histoire d'une culture*: 'What fascinated people about American cinema above all was colour, cinemascope, and women in colour and in immense close-ups' (de Baecque 2003, 263).

the movement were very broad. Equally, however, Demy's early films were ambivalently situated in the press in terms of their genre, their assumed audience, and their presentation of sexual desire. These films were quickly singled out as being unique among New Wave films for their lyricism, gentleness, and sentimentality. The possibility that *Lola* in particular might be a melodrama troubled its reviewers: critics from the film press attempted to simultaneously express admiration for the film and distance themselves from its melodramatic content, voicing the desire for distinction from ordinary filmgoers which Sellier describes (Sellier 2008, 15). Demy himself was consistently described as gentle and feminine, with an 'almost perverse sense of refinement': an indicator of outsider status pertaining to his sexuality and gender presentation (Graham 1968, 102). Given the masculine bias of both the New Wave moment, and the early New Wave scholarship, it is no surprise to notice, in the New Wave scholarship of the 1970s, the erasure of Demy's noticeably different cinema in favour of the more uniformly masculine and heterosexual films of the *Cahiers* critics.

This chapter concerns the films Demy made in the early 1960s, during the generally accepted dates of the French New Wave: *Lola*, *La Luxure/Lust*, a section of the 1962 anthology film *Les Sept péchés capitaux/The Seven Deadly Sins*, and *La Baie des Anges*. As Rodney Hill argues persuasively, these films have many of the qualities of New Wave films in terms of their production context, the way they were filmed, their use of actors, and their autobiographical inspiration and participation in a 'personal universe' (Hill 2008, 384.) Yet, the variation in the reviews of all these films, in terms of how they describe their genre, their tone and even their narratives, indicates that they participate in popular traditions which predate the New Wave, and offer themselves up to different kinds of viewership. By studying Demy's films alongside their critical reception, I have drawn conclusions about their simultaneous address to popular and

specialist audiences, their queer politics, and the picturesque yet half-hearted manner in which they represent heterosexual relationships. As it stands, the New Wave canon privileges those filmmakers involved in written cinephile culture, whose films show an affinity with film genres and styles coded as masculine, and excludes Demy. By intervening in the New Wave canon and studying Demy's exclusion I hope to uncover and denaturalise the values implicit in the canon, and suggest more productive frames in which to view Demy's cinema.

What is the New Wave?

Since the earliest critical texts on the New Wave appeared in 1961, film scholars have proposed competing definitions of what the movement is, and dealt with different canons of New Wave films. The five filmmaker-critics of the *Cahiers du cinéma* appear in all accounts, however, and have always dominated critical texts. Even revisionist texts such as Naomi Greene's *The French New Wave: A New Look*, which propose broad definitions of the movement, focus their analysis and historical account of the movement on these filmmakers. While the directors canonised as part of the core of the New Wave, especially Truffaut and Godard, continue to count among the most researched French filmmakers, and have been the subject of monographs from the late 1960s, many filmmakers who made films in the same way and at the same time but were written out of accounts of the New Wave are critically forgotten.

The text cited above by James Monaco and Claire Clouzot's *Le Cinéma français depuis la Nouvelle Vague* (1972) are two examples of early New Wave scholarship which offer what became the dominant characterisation of the New Wave. They describe the movement coming about thanks to the particular genius and inspiration of a

small group of filmmakers. These texts also tend to completely separate the New Wave from the French film traditions which preceded it: Clouzot describes, in broad strokes, 'the arrival of the men of the New Wave' in 1958 (Clouzot 1972, 3), and the definitive end of an era in French cinema characterised by indifferent audiences and artistic stagnation (3-4).

Various other texts, both contemporary and revisionist, oppose this characterisation of the New Wave. Jacques Siclier's *Nouvelle vague?*, published during the New Wave in 1961, contradicts the apparently widespread idea that this upsurge of new young filmmakers was unprecedented and revolutionary. Having described the successive 'waves' of new filmmakers starting their work in the industry roughly every five years since the Occupation, many of them young, Siclier writes that 'the 'New Wave' of 1959 turns out to be just another wave' (Siclier 1961, 14). To the waves Siclier lists, Colin Crisp adds the 'wave' of 1950-1957: first films by directors such as Alexandre Astruc, Louis Malle, Roger Vadim, Marcel Camus, Pierre Kast and Agnès Varda were hailed as bringing 'freedom, gaiety, exhilaration, intelligence, artistic integrity and relevance' to the French cinema (Crisp 1993, 421). A few years later in 1959, the filmmakers of the New Wave were described in very similar terms.

Crisp asserts the continuity of New Wave film with the preceding thirty years of classic film in *The Classic French Cinema*. The classic cinema is always evolving and surviving social, technological and industrial change, he argues, and the New Wave is not a total displacement of this cinema but a 'logical outcome and continuation of it' (416). The New Wave could be seen, Crisp argues, as 'little more than the emphatic foregrounding of the art-film end of existing production practices': producers were willing to undertake financially risky projects, as they had been for a long time, because 'their risks were largely underwritten by a state subsidy' which had existed since 1941;

and the large domestic and international audiences early New Wave films enjoyed had been generated by an existing network of ciné-clubs, the art-house circuit, and an international festival scene where French films had always fared well (417). Crisp's argument that the New Wave grew out of classic cinema is persuasive, and runs totally counter to rhetoric of both the critics and filmmakers who championed the movement, and the academic critics who wrote its dominant narrative and formed its canon.

That is not to say, however, that there was no New Wave. 120 filmmakers made their first film between 1958 and 1964, a phenomenon which merits a name and an explanation (Neupert 2007, xv). The New Wave, in my opinion, is best understood as the result of various interrelated changes in film culture and technology. As Richard Neupert outlines, it became possible in the 1950s to make films cheaply and with a small team, thanks to portable cameras and sound recorders, and sensitive film stock which allowed the filmmaker to film using available light outside of a studio (40-41.) Because of this, at the end of the 1950s, young filmmakers, many of them self-taught, found that they could make films with small budgets. Early New Wave films were funded in unconventional ways: Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge* (1959), for example, was largely paid for with money the filmmaker's wife had inherited. Filmmakers were subsequently able to integrate themselves into existing production and distribution structures as producers saw, especially after the success of Godard's *A bout de souffle/Breathless* (1959), that such films could draw enormous profits. They started to fund low-budget films by young filmmakers such as Demy's *Lola* in greater numbers.

André S. Labarthe, writing in 1960, argued that these budgetary constraints produced New Wave films' characteristic fresh, realistic narratives. Filmmakers now had to choose subjects for their films which could be shot cheaply outside of a studio, and actors who would not demand large salaries (Labarthe 1960, 15-16). Labarthe

equally stresses the importance of the *politique des auteurs* in the filmmaking and critical culture of this era (14). In a 1957 polemical article in *Arts*, François Truffaut makes two assertions which explain the influence of the *politique des auteurs* on New Wave films: firstly, that ‘a film is no more the work of a team than a novel, a poem, a symphony or a painting’, and that great filmmakers are responsible for every aspect of the finished film; secondly, that ‘anyone can be a filmmaker’ (Truffaut 1987, 212 & 218). He goes on to calculate that all you need to make a film is four or five million old francs, which he does not seem to consider to be a real obstacle; further, he states that ‘a camera can be borrowed’. As the *Cahiers* critics turned to filmmaking themselves this critical philosophy, alongside reduced budgets, lent itself to the making of films set in settings known to the filmmaker, concerning experiences they may have had or understood, with an original script written by the director.

This auteurist practice is one of the eight characteristics of New Wave film listed by Michel Marie in *The New Wave: An Artistic School* (2003). Others, which evidently developed from the new technologies available to filmmakers and the films’ reduced budgets, include: the privileging of natural locations over studios; the choice of direct sound and lighting; a small technical crew; and the casting of unknown or non-professional actors (Marie 2003, 70-71). These criteria are a good guide, although they do not all apply to every New Wave film. Even the five canonical New Wave filmmakers quickly started to change their habits: Chabrol’s *A double tour/Web of Passion* (1959) and *Les Bonnes femmes* (1960) were co-written with Paul Gégauff, and Truffaut’s *Jules et Jim* (1962) is a literary adaptation, but few would disagree that these are films of the New Wave.

New Wave films vary a lot in their content and their aesthetics. The separation often made between filmmakers who also wrote for the *Cahiers du cinéma* and those

who did not is unnecessary, and was often not made by the texts published on the New Wave in the early 1960s. An examination of the popular and highbrow press reception of Jacques Demy's New Wave films confirms that ideas about the scope of the movement were initially broad and accommodating, and the press hailed Demy's peculiar, romantic films as part of the New Wave. As we will see, these ideas narrowed only when academic criticism began to look back on the New Wave in the late 1960s.

Demy disappears from the New Wave canon

At the time of their release, there was consensus in the popular and highbrow press that Demy's first feature *Lola* and the anthology film *Les Sept péchés capitaux*, to which he contributed the short *La Luxure*, were films of the New Wave². Reviews of *La Baie des Anges*, released in 1963, suggested that the movement had come to an abrupt end, and those reviews which do mention the New Wave do it in terms that suggest it was over³. Recent critics, however, continue to align it with the movement because of its production context and aesthetics (Hill 2008, 391-392; Neupert 2016). Given the consensus in the press at the time of their release that *Lola* and *Les Sept péchés capitaux* were New Wave films, it is surprising to discover that there is little to no analysis of Demy's films in recent critical texts on the New Wave by Jean Douchet (1998), Michel Marie (2003), Richard Neupert (2007), Naomi Greene (2007), and Antoine de Baecque (2009). This might lead one to conclude, as Darren Waldron does, that 'his association

² Around half of published reviews placed *Lola* firmly in the New Wave; the rest did not attribute it to any school or movement. *Les Sept péchés capitaux* was unambiguously attributed to the New Wave in the press, which suggests that conceptions of the movement were broad even in 1962, as the film included shorts by Demy, Roger Vadim and Édouard Molinaro, who are now considered marginal figures to the movement.

³ Georges Sadoul in *Les Lettres françaises*, for example, described Demy as 'one of the best young French filmmakers to have been uncovered by the New Wave' (Sadoul 1963).

with the movement was the product of coincidence', and that his films have little in common with those of the *Cahiers* critics whose films set the aesthetic standards against which others are judged (Waldron 2015, 2).

In fact, the earliest critical texts on the New Wave did not hesitate to include *Lola* in their analysis of New Wave film. Two early studies of the movement—*La Nouvelle Vague* by Raymond Borde, Freddy Buache and Jean Curtelin (1962) and *La Nouvelle Vague: The first decade* (1963) by Raymond Durgnat—analyse *Lola* alongside films by the filmmaker-critics of the *Cahiers du cinéma*, and refer to Demy without qualification as a New Wave filmmaker. Borde includes Demy in a short list, alongside Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer, Rivette, Chabrol and Doniol-Valcroze, of filmmakers who 'constitute the New Wave, in its truest sense' and whose films share the qualities of 'snobbishness and self-satisfaction' (Borde, Buache and Curtelin 1962, 7).

Furthermore, a short biography of Demy appears in lists of New Wave filmmakers published in 1962 in special issues of both *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Positif*. The former is more laudatory than the latter, and both suggest that his films have different concerns and a different style to those of other filmmakers of the period. The *Cahiers* biography comments, 'His only mistake was not being born twenty years ago in Hollywood'⁴, and the *Positif* biography calls him a 'sub-Ophuls: a shopkeeper who thinks he has taste' (Borde, Buache and Curtelin 1962, 22-23). The *Cahiers* issue is also extremely unbalanced and devotes many pages to interviews with Godard, Truffaut and Chabrol such that they appear to be the core of the movement, a trend which later generations of critics perpetuated (Neupert 2007, xviii). Nonetheless, the very breadth

⁴ *Cahiers du cinéma* no. 138, December 1962, p. 65-66. The *Cahiers* list was collectively written by Michel Delahaye, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Jean Douchet, Claude de Givray, Jean-Luc Godard, Fereydoun Hoveyda, Pierre Kast, André S. Labarthe, Luc Moullet, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer and François Truffaut.

of these lists—the *Cahiers* list comprises 162 filmmakers, with 49 in *Positif*—suggests that conceptions of the movement in these two film journals were broad. They approach the movement as a vast generational shift in film culture, rather than as a small social group.

Demy is expunged from the history of the New Wave in later critical texts. In some cases, this appears to be because he never wrote film criticism. Demy does not receive serious consideration in Peter Graham's 1968 anthology of writing about the New Wave: if the commercial failure of *Lola* were not alluded to several times in an interview with François Truffaut, there would be no indication in the text that Demy existed at all (Graham 1968, 14, 102). James Monaco's *The New Wave*, as discussed above, also reduces the canon to the work of filmmakers who also participated in written film culture.

Meanwhile in France, Clouzot's *Le Cinéma français depuis la nouvelle vague* does not include Demy in a list of twenty-three New Wave filmmakers because his films are not part of the 'aesthetic current' of the New Wave (Clouzot 1972, 22). She chooses instead to analyse him as one of eleven 'independent figures', and her analysis praises the 'coherence of his aesthetic universe' with its recurring cast of single mothers, abandoned women and rejected lovers, and the 'humour, nostalgia and melodrama' which frequently characterise the tone of his films (150). Without stating it explicitly, Clouzot suggests that Demy's female-centred narratives make him unique among filmmakers of the period. This comment that Demy's films exist in a world of their own, and are not suitable for consideration alongside films made at the same time by other filmmakers, was already a commonplace in writing on Demy in 1972.

The catalogue of a 1986 retrospective entitled 'La Nouvelle Vague, et après', at the Cinémathèque française, suggests that the process of writing Demy out of the history of the movement was almost complete. The catalogue's 'photo album' features large photographs, most of them featuring the New Wave stars Anna Karina, Jean-Paul Belmondo or Jean-Pierre Léaud, often alongside one of the filmmakers of the *Cahiers* group (Douin 1986). This is the image of the New Wave as it is promoted in texts from Monaco's *New Wave* through to de Baecque's *La Nouvelle Vague*: urban, good-looking and homogeneous. Three films by Demy were screened at the retrospective: the 1956 short *Le Sabotier du Val de Loire*, *La Baie des Anges* and *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*; curiously, *Lola* was not chosen. By contrast, the exhibition screened nine films by Godard going up to 1984's *Je Vous Salue Marie/Hail Mary*; and films by international filmmakers such as Jim Jarmusch and Euzhan Palcy.

As I have already noted, Demy is not the only filmmaker to have fared badly in the process of canon formation. He probably maintained a fairly high profile during the rest of his career only because of the success of later films such as *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* and *Peau d'âne*, which helped to shape the stardom of Catherine Deneuve and then enjoyed enduring popularity thanks to that stardom. Filmmakers such as Marcel Hanoun and Jean-Daniel Pollet, both of whom were singled out as especially gifted New Wave filmmakers by Siclier in 1961, disappeared early from critical texts on the New Wave and their New Wave films are now commercially unavailable. The reasons for their exclusion from discourses on the New Wave may be complex, but it is certainly significant that both these directors, like Demy, did not make films about the experiences of affluent, white, heterosexual Parisian men. Hanoun's *Une Simple Histoire/A Simple Story* (1958) tells the story of a homeless mother and daughter struggling to find a place to live in Paris. Pollet's short

Pourvu qu'on ait l'ivresse (1957) is set in two dance clubs in a Paris suburb, has no dialogue and a slim narrative, and devotes much of its running time to the spectacle of young people dancing. Both of these filmmakers, like Demy, made films in geographical, social and economic milieu which are unrepresented in the New Wave films of the *Cahiers* critics. The exclusion of their early films from critical texts on the movement speaks to the interests and priorities of the many critics who contributed to the formation of the New Wave canon.

Is Demy New Wave?

In recent scholarship, there is disagreement among Demy scholars about whether or not his films belong to the New Wave. Michel Marie (2011) and Darren Waldron (2014) have both argued in recent texts that Demy's early films are not real New Wave films. In an essay published in the catalogue of a retrospective on Demy at the San Sebastián Film Festival, Marie asks of the filmmaker, 'Is it not merely that the dates of his career match those of the movement [New Wave] in the 1960s? What link is there between his often large-budgeted, star-studded, although very particular, cinema and the films of Godard, Rivette, Chabrol, Rohmer or Truffaut?' (Marie 2011, 13). Similarly, Waldron writes that 'Demy's preoccupation with musicals and fairytales distinguishes him from his Nouvelle Vague contemporaries' (23) and that 'his association with the movement was a product of coincidence' (3). Nonetheless, in his chapter on the New Wave, he highlights the qualities of *Lola*, *Bay of Angels* and 1968's *Model Shop* which ally them to other New Wave films.

Two articles by Rodney Hill and one by Richard Neupert argue the opposite, and make a case for Demy's inclusion in the New Wave canon. In 'Demy-Monde: The

New Wave Films of Jacques Demy', Hill states that 'Demy's early films fit squarely into New-Wave aesthetics and polemics, and in doing so they demand that we expand our understanding of the movement' (Hill 2008, 383). Neupert argues that *La Baie des Anges* specifically has a 'New Wave mode of production', and 'proves that [Demy] is a key figure for the wave of new French cinema of the 1960s.'

I believe that Hill and Neupert's conclusions are correct. I also believe that this framework is limiting. To argue to expand the New Wave canon enough to accommodate Demy, as Hill and Neupert have done, is to further shore up the status of the New Wave as a 'patrimonial monument' in French film history, at the expense of other types of film, particularly popular film (Sellier 2008, 2). Hill and Neupert's articles do not address what to my mind is the most interesting aspect of Demy's non-inclusion in the New Wave canon: the question of why Demy's early films were so thoroughly erased from the history of the movement to begin with. This question is the starting point of my investigation of Demy's early films.

By combining analysis of *Lola*, *La Luxure* and *La Baie des Anges* with an understanding of their critical reception in journal and newspaper reviews as well as in academic criticism, I will uncover reasons for their marginalisation in discourses about the New Wave. It is my contention that the films are quietly critical of the sexual politics of New Wave films. I will also explore how they might belong simultaneously to traditions besides the New Wave, some of which, such as melodrama, were not appreciated by the *Cahiers* critics who dominate critical accounts of the New Wave. I will begin my analysis with *La Luxure* because, despite its brevity, it illuminates Demy's critical engagement with the politics and aesthetics of New Wave films.

La Luxure

In *La Luxure* we find a tension between modern New Wave sexual politics, and the nostalgia and romance with which many associate Demy's cinema. The film, like *Lola* and *La Baie des Anges*, indicates men's desire for women, without assuming a heterosexual male viewer or using the camera to stage a man's gaze on a woman. The film has two registers—one everyday, and one fantastical—allied to its two major characters, Jacques (Laurent Terzieff), a man who harasses every woman he passes on the street; and his friend Bernard (Jean-Louis Trintignant), who recounts an anecdote from his childhood involving a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word *luxure* (lust). Both actors were known for their work in New Wave films and, like countless other New Wave leading men, and like *Lola*'s Roland Cassard (Marc Michel) and *La Baie des Anges*'s Jean Fournier (Claude Mann), they are young, white, thin, smartly dressed and dark-haired⁵.

Jacques and Bernard's dialogue is quick and rhythmic, full of wordplay, and often rhyming. The two men's easy exchange is complemented by Demy's relaxed, fluid camerawork in the opening long take, which follows them back and forth over a small stretch of street as Jacques tries to pick up women and Bernard decides to buy a book of paintings by Bosch. The locations of those parts of *La Luxure* which take place in the narrative present—a Paris street and a bar—give it the look of other New Wave films, but the combination of lyrical dialogue and visual style elevate the film out of the

⁵ Vincendeau's description of the visual similarities between New Wave actors and directors is pertinent: 'Photographs of the early 1960s...show us actors who look remarkably like each other and the directors: good-looking young men of slight build with short dark hair, wearing neat Italian-style suits and ties, cigarettes in the corner of their mouths' (Vincendeau 2000, 115).

register of the everyday and align it with other Demy films with hyper-stylised or anti-realist aesthetics.

Demy approaches the film's subject, lust, in two ways, through its two major characters. In Jacques we see clear echoes of other men in New Wave films, whose sexual relationships with women often dominate the narrative and whose heterosexual desire, which is also apparently that of the filmmaker, guides the film's images such that we see women through their eyes. *La Luxure*, however, denies the viewer access to Jacques' perspective, through its placement of the camera and the actors. Jacques's constant, almost compulsive flirting is shown to be bothersome to the women he tries to talk to, and the film declines to accord visual dominance and social legitimacy to the young man's desires. His friend Bernard, meanwhile, tolerates Jacques' flirting with the indulgence of an old friend, and shows no particular interest in women. *La Luxure* thus views heterosexual men's desire at a critical distance, and the film can function as a critique of the visual politics of New Wave films.

The film opens with a street scene filmed in one take lasting more than two minutes. It fades in on a busy street with Jacques walking away from the camera in the centre of the frame. He comments on each woman who walks past him, as he will continue to do throughout the film, with the women ignoring him. One can imagine a more classically New Wave version of the film's opening scene, which would cut between frontal shots of Jacques, looking from left to right at the women passing by, and eyeline match shots which show us his perspective on these women. Instead, the camera keeps both Jacques and the women in the frame for this long single take, initially showing Jacques with his back to the camera (fig. 1a). Women walk towards the camera on either side, thus making their reactions to Jacques's comments visible to the viewer. We are offered a perspective on the action that is not rooted in any specific

person's subjectivity: Jacques's lust is the subject of the narrative at this point, but the scene is filmed without lust, as it never shows the viewer what Jacques sees.

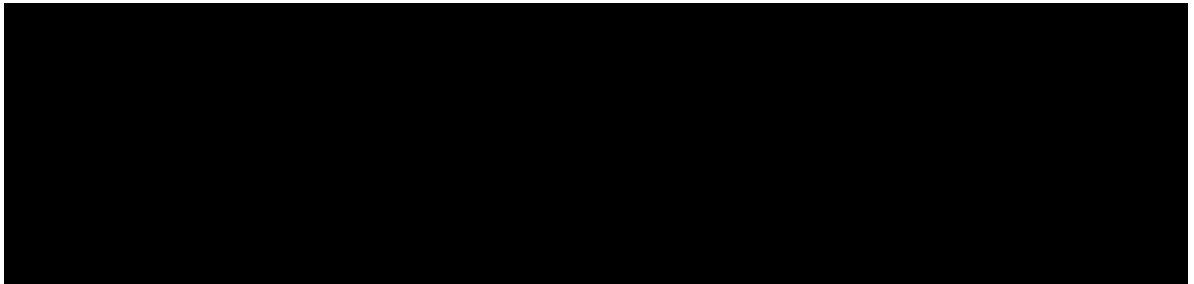


Fig. 1 a-b.

The appearance in the street of a young woman played by Corinne Marchand demands to be read as an allusion to Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962). Varda's film was released one month after *Les Sept péchés capitaux*, but it is likely that the former had been finished or was in production, and that Demy was aware of its content. The young woman smiles wearily as Jacques follows her down the street delivering a bizarre prepared gambit about incest. As she crosses the street, the camera stops and we watch her cross the street and walk on (fig. 1b). The slight lingering of the camera here allows the viewer to dwell on the woman's trajectory away from Jacques, and indicates that she has places to be and will be going on with her day. Marchand's appearance in the street calls forward to Varda's film, in which a famous woman who spends her life as the subject of a desiring gaze goes out into the street and takes on a role traditionally accorded only to men like Jacques, that of the *flâneur*, who exercises her own gaze.

The second take on the idea of lust is offered through Bernard. After tells Jacques that as a child he used to confuse the words *luxure* (lust), and *luxe* (luxury), Demy introduces a long cutaway to scenes from Bernard's childhood. The cutaway has a different tone to the scenes set in the narrative present, created by classical rather than jazz music and the insertion of fantasy scenes. This section of the film concerns the young Bernard's misunderstanding about the meaning of the word *luxure*, through

conversations with his friend Paul from catechism class and with his family. During Bernard's conversations with Paul the viewer sees Bernard's naïve visions of hell as a place where people are punished for living too luxuriously. Demy also comments upon Bernard's stifling Catholic education and joyless family life in the cutaway. The unhappiness of his parents, for example, is conveyed using a series of face-on shots which frame them as distant opponents (fig. 2 a-b). It is revealed Bernard's his domineering father (Jean Desailly) does not know what *luxure* means either, and that his mother (Micheline Presle) refuses to tell him, thus suggesting a general mystification of sex even among adults.

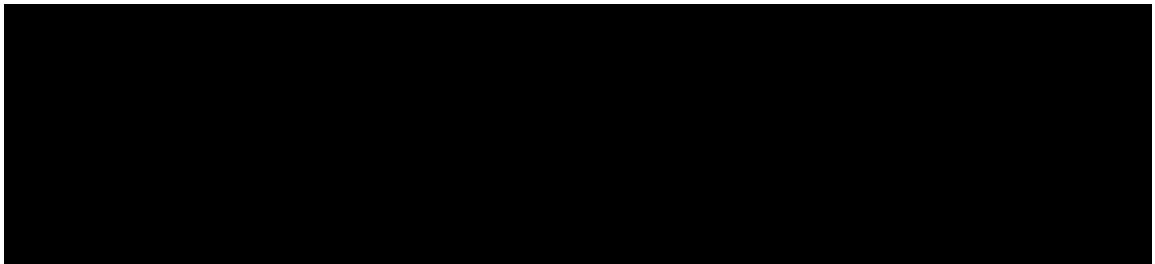


Fig. 2 a-b.

Back in the narrative present, the young Bernard's childish and strange ideas about lust are superimposed onto the Jacques' lustful gaze. Inspired by a painting by Bosch, Jacques looks up at the men and women in the café and with dissolves they are shown clothed, naked, and clothed again. In the final dissolve we see a woman turn into a skeleton, and back again. This moment makes a joke of Jacques's focus on women's bodies, by uncovering a skeleton, associated with horror and the medical, rather than a woman's naked body. It also parallels the young Bernard's fantasy, upon reading a dictionary definition of *luxure*, of a butcher carrying a pig carcass to a table and preparing to cut it up, because butchers 'openly partake in the pleasures of the flesh'. Here, a child's naïve and tentative grasp of the adult world is imposed on the New

Wave man, and his intrusive gaze on women becomes a piece of light-hearted visual comedy.

In the scenes which focus on Jacques, Demy appropriates other New Wave directors' concern for modern sexual relationships, but represents them from a different visual and political perspective. Simultaneously, Demy's unusual stylistic choices and fantasy scenes, the evocation of the innocence of children, and the presence in the film of a character who evidently does not share or care for his friend's bothersome heterosexual desire, express a distance between the filmmaker and the sexual politics of New Wave films. In Demy's other New Wave films, *Lola* and *La Baie des Anges*, we see the same tensions between New Wave aesthetics and a more lyrical, expressive style; and between the representation of heterosexual romance and forms of desire and love that are less commonly represented. In examining these films and their critical reception I will illuminate their exclusion from the New Wave canon, and uncover styles and themes which would return in films throughout Demy's career.

Lola

In Demy's original scenario, *Lola* was a musical comedy entitled 'Un billet pour Johannesburg' ('A Ticket to Johannesburg'). The expensive project, replete with ballets and musical numbers, and to be filmed in colour, did not interest a single producer until Jean-Luc Godard introduced Demy to Georges de Beauregard. De Beauregard, the 'exemplary New Wave producer', had produced Godard's *A bout de souffle* and looking for more films to finance by young filmmakers willing to work with very small budgets (Berthomé 2014, 111; Neupert 2007, 43). It is surely because of the tension between its origins as a musical and its drastically reduced budget and New

Wave production context that *Lola* is something of a hybrid film. It confounded contemporary reviewers, who were overwhelmingly positive in their reception of the film but fretted a great deal, especially in the highbrow press, over its sentimentality and its explicit debt to certain popular Hollywood genres.

The narrative follows several people in Nantes as they meet, form friendships and attractions, and discuss their memories and dreams for the future. Most canonised New Wave films have at their heart a male protagonist as well as often a less significant female love interest (Godard's *A bout de souffle* and *Le Petit Soldat/The Little Soldier* (1960), Truffaut's *Tirez sur le pianist/Shoot the Piano Player* (1960)), or an idealised friendship between two men which is threatened by the dangerous interference of a woman (Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge*, Godard's *Bande à part/Band of Outsiders* (1964), Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* (1962)). In contrast, *Lola* has a truly diffuse narrative focus which depicts various kinds of affective bonds including romantic, sexual, family and friendly relationships, rather than focusing on the couple. It is perhaps because of *Lola*'s large cast of characters and its concern with their daily lives that several contemporary reviews criticised its narrative for being a *fait-divers*—a trivial story (Ledieu 1961, 96; Huret & Salachas 1961, 4; de Baroncelli 1961)⁶.

Lola has six principal characters who form a network of relationships. Lola (Anouk Aimée) is a cabaret dancer and single mother who is waiting for her first love and the father of her child, Michel (Jacques Harden), to return from a seven year absence. Michel arrives in Nantes in the first scene of *Lola*, and appears in isolated scenes throughout the film driving around the city in his white convertible. He reunites with Lola and his son at the end of the film. Roland (Marc Michel), a disaffected young

⁶ Two of these reviews qualify 'fait-divers' with 'banal', and one adds 'of the kind you might read in a popular newspaper'.

man who was in love with Lola at school, meets her by chance in the street early in the film and appears to fall in love with her again, but when she rejects him he leaves town on a shady business assignment involving some diamonds. Roland meets Mme Desnoyer (Elina Labourdette), a former dancer and single mother, and Cécile (Anne Dupeyroux), her daughter, in a bookshop, and becomes friends with the two. Franky (Alan Scott), an American sailor who resembles Michel, is involved in a casual sexual relationship with Lola, and also spends some time with Cécile who seems to have a crush on him. At the end of the film, Michel returns to Lola and her son Yvon (Gérard Delaroche), and the family is last seen leaving town in Michel's car.

In addition to these six characters who are all filmed in the streets of Nantes, walking, running, driving and dancing between different locations, Demy includes in *Lola* two characters who do not go anywhere: Claire (Catherine Lutz), the owner of a café frequented by Roland, and Jeanne (Margo Lion), who comes there every day to paint and who turns out to be Michel's mother. The relationship between the two women is never explained but Demy discreetly suggests that they live together: they are shown emerging from the same door, which clearly leads to an apartment, in separate scenes. Claire and Jeanne are the first of a number of pairs of women in Demy's films who share domestic space, without men: a quiet gesture towards forms of intimacy and kinship between women which are rarely depicted in French films of this period.

Emotional realism and subjective time

Budgetary constraints impose onto *Lola* some of the conventions of realism, such as location shooting and black-and-white photography. Equally, Demy employs stylistic techniques which distance *Lola* from the films of his contemporaries which

draw intentionally on more realist aesthetics. Shots from plainly non-human perspectives such as crane shots, the use of slow motion, and the clearly signposted use of familiar cinematic visual tropes contribute to an atmosphere of dream-like improbability and cinematic nostalgia. Further, the obvious post-synchronisation of the dialogue, imposed on Demy by his drastically reduced budget, undermines the verisimilitude of the characters by drawing attention to the process of sound recording. The narrative is also improbable, and constructed around a series of coincidences. Several reviews of *Lola* described it as realist, with qualifications: Pierre Marcabru described it as achieving a 'subjective realism'; Samuel Lachize writes that Demy 'introduces into melodrama a sort of modern poetic realism'; Madaleine Garrigou-Lagrange notes that the film achieves a 'moving truthfulness, not of the kind which is achieved through verisimilitude' (Marcabru 1961; Lachize 1961; Garrigou-Lagrange 1961).

What I believe these critics are gesturing towards is that although *Lola* is not consistently realistic in its narrative or style, it has an emotional realism and an attention to how certain common experiences feel. With the reduced budget given to him by de Beauregard, Demy was forced to recreate the expressive effects of the songs and ballets he included in his original script with camera movement, mise-en-scène, music and editing. The style of *Lola* strives to express how its characters are feeling and to impress upon the viewer something of their experience of the arguably everyday and low-stakes events of the plot. This attention to sentiment sets *Lola* apart from other films of the New Wave, and it is also significant that he is particularly attentive to the affective experiences of women and girls. The aspirations of films by other filmmakers of the New Wave to make cinema 'in the first person' and express a personal worldview, by

contrast, resulted in a large number of films with which privilege the perspective of a male hero and are more interested in action than in emotion.

The scene in which Cécile and Franky go to the carnival together is exemplary. One major concern of *Lola*, to which the characters return repeatedly in the dialogue, is that of first love and its aftereffects. Demy endeavours to convey, in this scene, what first love feels like to Cécile. The significance of the moment for Cécile, rather than Franky, has been established in the narrative by Cécile's connection to Lola, who lived a moment very similar to this on her fourteenth birthday, fell in love, and is still living with the consequences. The sequence, however, grounds Cécile's experiences in the subjectively experienced present, and resists implying anything about her future. Demy's camera privileges Cécile throughout, and the scene is clearly intended to express her feelings, rather than Franky's. Although he is physically significantly larger than Cécile and therefore tends to dominate their two-shots, Demy's framing of the pair tends to draw the viewer's eye to Cécile's face. Franky's is either obscured by darkness, out of the frame, or, on the caterpillar ride, cut through vertically with one of the canopy's supports (fig. 3 a-b). In this moment, Franky appears to be a simple cypher who furnishes an occasion to explore the feeling of first love from a young girl's perspective.

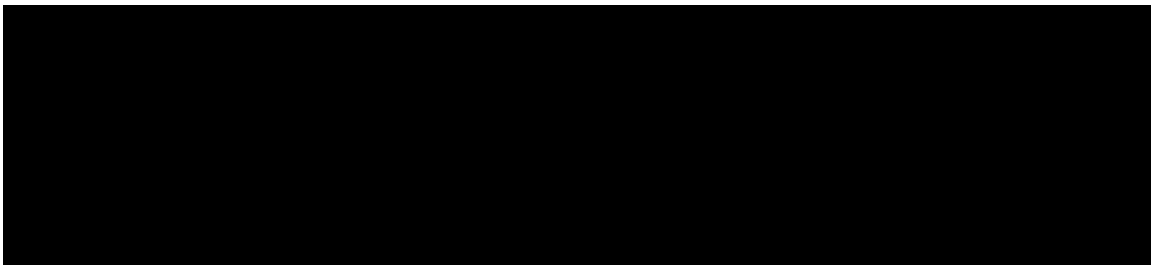


Fig. 3 a-b.

The fairground sequence uses various techniques to manipulate time, and to present the passage of time as it is experienced by Cécile. The first shots are filmed at

normal speed, but certain effects of choreography, music and editing combine to give an impression of acceleration. There is continuous movement within the frame, either of bodies running, jumping or being jostled by the rides, or of the camera itself, which is most often already in motion at the moment of a cut. The movement of the camera is also often fast and unsteady thanks to its placement on the fairground rides themselves. These shots are accompanied by repetitive, giddy, nondiegetic harpsichord music. Throughout the early shots the music, the continuous motion, and the regular ellipses which compress Cécile and Franky's date into a three minute sequence convey frenetic excitement and an impression of time passing too fast.

Subsequently, as Cécile and Franky jump off the caterpillar and run through the fair, shots unfold in slow motion and the music changes to a similar but slower piece. The slow motion shots are a fitting replacement for the ballet Demy had planned for this moment in the film. The non-narrative spectacle of dancing bodies is replaced by the equally gratuitous but beautiful spectacle of the movements of Cécile and Franky's clothes, and the rising and falling of Cécile's loose hair, which she took down from its ponytail at the start of the carnival scene. Franky lifting Cécile out of her seat in the caterpillar and turning her in mid-air recalls dance in a more literal way. Furthermore, the use of slow motion brackets this moment off from the rest of *Lola*, and gives it a dreamlike quality which suggests how Cécile feels. Watching the characters move in slow motion, which is impossible in life but enabled in the film by a simple cinematic trick, imbues the scene with a feeling of implausibility and detaches it from the everyday concerns with which *Lola* is occasionally preoccupied.

Ultimately, whether suggesting giddy excitement and a feeling of time rushing by too fast, or isolating the moment through the use of slow motion, Demy grounds this moment in Cécile's life in the subjectively experienced present. Slow motion keeps the

viewer in the moment for longer and suggests a resistance to hurtling towards a future full of consequences for the girl; it suspends the film's narrative concerns and devotes itself to a celebration of visual spectacle and romantic sentiment. This expression of the intensity and transience of Cécile's feelings in this moment has queer political implications. Cécile's mother is horrified to discover that she has been at the fair with a man. She is surely concerned about social disgrace, or even unplanned pregnancy, which would have serious implications for the respectable future her mother would like for her. Demy's play with time in this scene, however, resists what Jack Halberstam calls 'reproductive time': a temporality organised around biological reproduction and the generational reproduction of social norms (Halberstam 2005, 5). Rather than contemplating social respectability and the marriage and family life Cécile's mother hopes will await her, Demy grounds *Lola* in the present, as it is experienced by Cécile.

The wrong kind of cinephilia

The use of slow motion in the scene of Cécile and Franky's date may evoke cinematic memories, and recall the use of the technique in films by Jean Vigo (*A propos de Nice* (1930), *Zéro de conduit/Zero for Conduct* (1933)) and Jean Cocteau (*La Belle et la bête/Beauty and the Beast* (1946)). Throughout *Lola* Demy uses citation to embed the film within a network of implicitly beloved films. Rodney Hill makes an extensive list of *Lola*'s cinematic intertexts which include Josef von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* (1930), several films by Max Ophüls (to whom *Lola* is dedicated), American musicals, particularly those starring Gene Kelly, and Robert Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1945) (Hill 2008, 386-387). We can add that the film's string of narrative

coincidences and its tearjerking, highly improbable ending draw self-consciously on classical melodrama.

Although many New Wave films were similarly citational, a study of critics' responses to *Lola* indicates that Demy was seen to be drawing on the wrong kind of mass culture. These responses, in publications of all types, illuminate a value system which disdains melodrama, romance, and other narrative and stylistic forms which are associated with female audiences. Critics' contempt for, or denial or displacement of, the love story in *Lola* and its heightened sentimentality recall Pierre Bourdieu's theorisation of art and taste in *Distinction* (1979). On the basis of surveys about art and beauty conducted with people of different social classes, Bourdieu theorises about taste, arguing that individuals who have acquired 'pure taste' through their education and upbringing disdain art which draws too directly on everyday experience and social or moral concerns. The 'pure gaze' of the holder of legitimate taste refuses 'any 'vulgar' surrender to easy seduction and collective enthusiasm' (Bourdieu 2010, 27). It insists that works be looked upon with emotional detachment, and 'displac[es] the interest from the 'content', characters, plot etc., to the form'. Art which implicates the viewer emotionally is considered vulgar. Legitimate taste also mandates that everyday objects function as allegories or symbols if they are to be seen as legitimate objects of art. In *Masculine Singular*, which draws occasionally on Bourdieu's theorisation of taste, Sellier applies Bourdieu's conclusions to the film criticism of the *Cahiers* group, and writes that this kind of film criticism would approach a film by 'purifying it as much as possible of its social – as well as of its feminine, or affective – dimensions' (Sellier 2008, 21).

The critical reception of *Lola* is suggestive of an intellectual climate which is hostile to cinema which is moving, sentimental, or straightforwardly entertaining, and

tends to strip films of their narrative content in order to praise the abstract and the formal. Critics writing about *Lola* at the time of its release, especially in the highbrow press and film journals, appeared anxious about the film's sentimentality and the narrative coincidences and moments of emotional excess which ally it with melodrama. In response, they would praise the film's form, or its abstract values, which apparently redeem the film and make it better than those films by which it appears to be influenced.

Christian Ledieu in *Études cinématographique* wrote that although the plot of *Lola* is a 'vulgar melodrama', Demy transcended the story and turned it into something of universal value: 'Lola is a love story but it is also the story of Love, and therefore of life' (Ledieu 1961, 99). Georges Sadoul listed melodramatic elements of the plot: 'A young mother, a long-lost father, a son whose mother had given up waiting for him'; with these elements, Sadoul argues, 'It would have been easy...to write a perfect melodrama'. He insisted, however, that Demy's lightness of touch makes *Lola* better than a melodrama; instead it is 'a fine lace whose threads interlink with whimsical precision' (Sadoul 1961). François Weyergans in *Cahiers du cinéma* downplayed the film's sentimentality by appraising it in abstract terms. He praised the film's style using vague terms such as 'charm' and 'beauty' and calls *Lola* 'pure cinema', but engaged very little with its narrative, once again focusing on what is abstract and universalisable rather than the film's quite consistent engagement with the everyday, or its romance narrative (Weyergans 1961, 25).

It is easy to read, in these reviews, a desire on the part of critics to distance themselves from the popular and feminine-gendered forms of culture on which Demy draws explicitly in *Lola*. Many reviews make the same point: that *Lola* would be a melodrama, but it's not, because it's good. I will return to Demy's use of melodrama, in relation to the genre's status as a popular genre associated with female audiences, in

Chapter 4. Many of the issues at stake in *Lola*'s reception—melodrama, citation, address, and irony—can be fruitfully discussed in relation to the film's ending, during which Michel returns to Lola and Yvon at the last possible moment, as they are preparing to leave for Marseille. The film's happy ending situates *Lola* within a specifically feminine cinematic genealogy which includes weepies and romance films; equally, the scene's self-reflexivity offers the opportunity for the viewer to read its high sentimentality ironically—an opportunity many highbrow critics preferred to take.

Michel's return to Lola is characterised by a narrative improbability and stylistic excess so extreme that they become a form of reflexivity in themselves. Michel enters the cabaret, where Lola and Yvon are saying goodbye to a group of dancers, through a large pair of curtains, much like cinema curtains, in the centre of the frame (fig. 4a). These curtains, and the scene's romantic music, invite the viewer to regard what follows first and foremost as a piece of cinema. As Lola sees Michel she walks forward into focus in the centre of the frame, smiles broadly, and shouts his name as the music reaches a climax (fig. 4b). The coincidence of the climax in the music, Lola's central position in the frame, and the shot's shallow focus conveys the significance of the moment using a visual style deriving from classical Hollywood. Michel tells Lola that he could not return for so many years because he was stranded on Matareva, an island in the Pacific. His tale is curiously similar to the plot of *Return to Paradise* (Mark Robson, 1953), the film Roland goes to see after being fired at the start of *Lola*. This detail, along with the editing and the style, are clichéd and excessive.

From the moment Lola and Michel embrace, camera angles separate the action in the room into two distinct scenes: at one angle, Lola and Michel play out the end of a romantic movie, while at the opposite angle, the watching women form a diegetic audience which specifically recalls an audience of women crying at the end of the

movie. After Lola and Michel embrace in a tightly-framed shot which lingers for a gratuitous eleven seconds, Lola turns to face the other dancers. An eyeline match shows the dancers, who have all improbably started to cry at the sight of this reunion, like a cinema audience weeping at the climactic moment of a sentimental movie (fig. 4c). Later, a shot of Michel and Lola recounting their experiences of their separation is interrupted by a cut to a shot of a tearful Dolly (Dorothée Blank) among the other dancers, staring into the camera (fig. 4d). This is a further step into self-reflexivity: the earlier shot of weeping women is merely improbable, but this form of direct address is rarely seen in classic film outside the Hollywood musical.

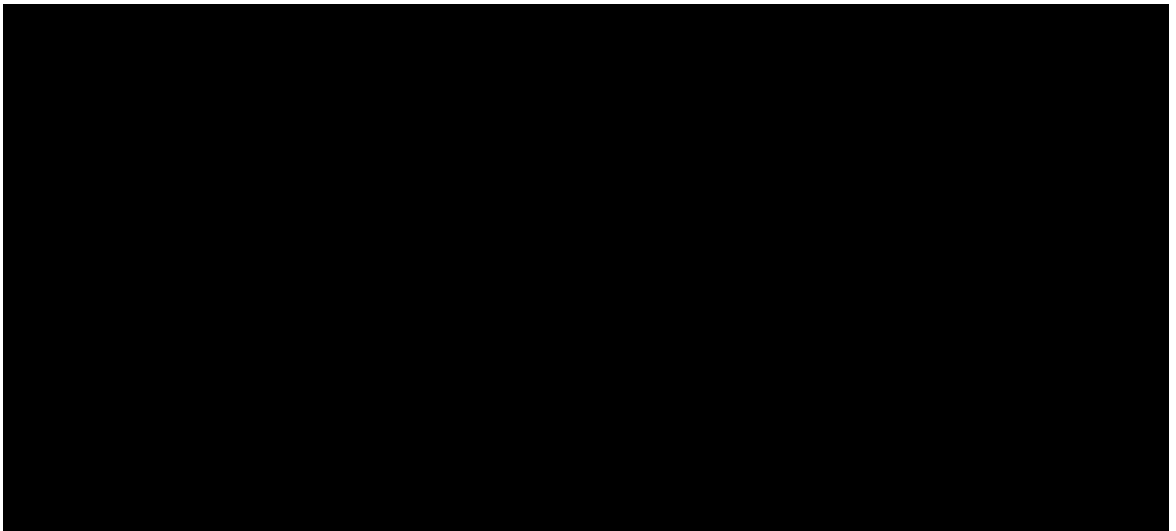


Fig. 4 a-d.

These two shots of the ‘audience’ can both be read as playful and deconstructive in their improbability and their play with cinematic conventions, calling on the audience to disengage from the scene and undermining the well-worn romance narrative it is rehearsing. Alternatively, or simultaneously, they could be read as a prompt to appreciate the genuine emotion of the scene, which is clearly moving to its diegetic audience, and an affectionate tribute to women’s films and melodramas. To argue that the ending of *Lola* is purely ironic is to perform the same move as many contemporary reviewers: attempting to distance the film from the feminine-identified cinematic history

on which it explicitly draws, in order to argue for its value as a work of modernist art. A different reading would see Demy enabling two ways of viewing the scene simultaneously: he allows the viewer to disengage and observe the construction of the scene, which borrows from Hollywood cinema and generic romance narratives; he demonstrates, at the same time, that people find this type of scene moving.

Scenes such as this one demonstrate how Demy was able to pass as both a New Wave director, and a director of popular genre films; how his films could have been covered favourably in both film journals and popular film magazines. This double address also clearly contributes to his continued marginalisation on critical writing on the New Wave, as critics accustomed to the New Wave canon established by Monaco in 1976 saw little in common between these films and Demy's.

Queering the New Wave gaze and the New Wave man

La Luxure, *Lola* and, as we shall see, *La Baie des Anges*, all depict men's desire for women, and heterosexual relationships, without conviction, and without replicating the sexist visual politics of canonised New Wave films. Anouk Aimée as Lola, dressed in the basque the character performs in, is the focus of *Lola*'s posters and theatrical trailer, thus framing Lola as the film's major attraction and inviting an analogy between the character's role in the sexual economy of the cabaret and the female star's role in the sexual economy circulating between the film, the production company and the filmgoing public. In the film itself, however, Lola appears as the object of many men's desires but is not presented to the audience as an accessible, desirable body.

In an early moment in the film, sailors gathered outside L'Eldorado, the cabaret at which Lola works, are shown looking at photographs of Lola in her performance

clothes before deciding to go into the cabaret, as cinemagoers may have been enticed to the cinema by these publicity images (fig. 5a). Our first glimpse of Lola in person, however, sees her positioned on the far left side of the frame in a long shot dominated by the bodies of sailors and dancers which move around and constantly cross our line of sight to her (fig. 5b). Subsequent shots continue to obscure her body. Franky, and the camera and viewer, follow her across the club, stopping when she stops; both are made to wait for her when she goes into another room to get dressed, as a significant part of the screen is left empty. In these moments, Lola is both elusive and commanding.

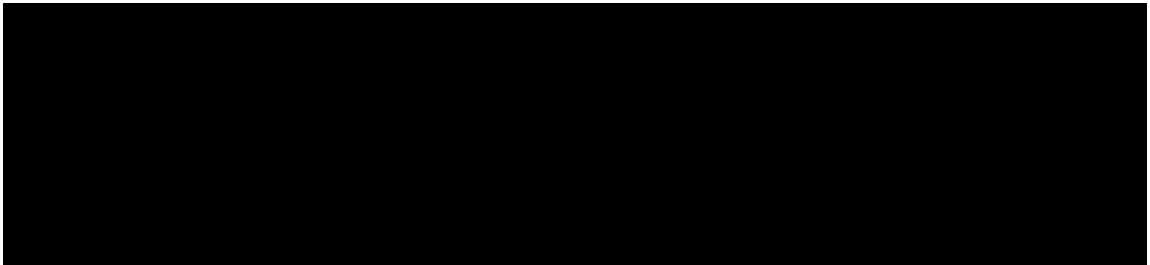


Fig. 5 a-b.

Demy generally emphasises that L'Eldorado is a place of community and friendship between women. Lola and the other dancers show care and concern for one another, and their caring gestures are in a specifically feminine register: they are clearly accustomed to lending each other make-up, they compliment one another's clothes, and ask each other personal questions with affection. By contrast, relationships between men and women at the cabaret are primarily transactional, a fact which creates an unconventional visual regime. The first scene at the cabaret offers point of view shots originating from both the sailors and the dancers (fig. 6 a-b). The women here are exercising their own gaze on the men, as well as self-consciously posing for them, as active participants in the cabaret's visual and monetary economies. Even as he depicts a space where men go to watch women, Demy maintains a critical distance to the typical sexual politics of the New Wave.



Fig. 6 a-b.

Reviews of *Lola* would assign it into different genres or traditions, depending on whether the reviewer perceived Roland, or Lola, to be its protagonist. Those reviews that took Roland for the protagonist tended to be in highbrow publications, and these reviews would centre their description of the film's narrative on him. Georges Sadoul, reviewing of *Lola* in *Les Lettres françaises*, began his account of the plot with a description of Roland which evokes the image of the disaffected, solitary New Wave man: 'In a rented room, a boy is bored' (Sadoul 1961). Sadoul did not introduce Lola, the title character, until the third paragraph of this synopsis. Many other reviewers, particularly those in popular publications, framed Lola as the film's protagonist: a review in *Télérama* for example begins by describing the love between Lola and Michel, and did not introduce Roland until the third paragraph⁷. Sadoul's description of Roland as the protagonist aligns *Lola* with New Wave films led by male heroes, even though Roland is in fact a small part of a sprawling narrative; the *Télérama* review, by contrast, pitches the film as a romance film. They also anticipate two different audiences for the film: an audience expecting a New Wave film with a male hero, and an audience expecting a female-led romance.

Sadoul is not mistaken to see in Roland echoes of the New Wave man as audiences had already seen him in films by Godard, Chabrol and Truffaut. Sellier sets out a description of the New Wave hero in *Masculine Singular* to which Roland

⁷ *Télérama*, 27th August 1961. No author or page.

conforms in some respects. Sellier remarks that New Wave heroes live ‘an absurd everyday life’, which Roland arguably does: he is not remotely perturbed by losing his job in an early scene because he is too busy reading to come to work on time (Sellier 2008, 96). His early dialogue expresses the nihilism and social detachment of the New Wave man, as he sits in a café and complains, ‘sometimes everything sickens me’. He is also the exact physical type of other New Wave men—thin, young, white and dark-haired—and he is explicitly connected to Michel Poiccard, the hero of *A bout de souffle*: when asked if he has any friends he responds, ‘I had a friend, Poiccard, but he got himself killed.’

Certain critics, evidently weary of the New Wave, reacted to this in-joke with distaste (Gauthier 1961, 105; Ledieu 1961). This remark, however, makes a promise on which the film refuses to deliver wholeheartedly. While Roland has some of the superficial markers of the New Wave man, and was therefore identified as the film’s protagonist by critics who expected a New Wave film, his character both less significant, and queerer, than the average New Wave hero. Rather than resembling the isolated, amoral and sexually successful New Wave man Sellier describes, Roland in fact embodies a rather gentle, melancholy, and futureless masculinity.

Jacques Siclier polemically criticises the amorality of the New Wave man in a chapter entitled ‘The Cinema of Contempt’ (Siclier 1961, 110-121). In comparison to the archetype Siclier describes, who is mean, sexist and individualistic, Roland is rather pleasant. He is often seen enjoying friendly interactions with other people—usually women—and comes to know Cécile and Mme Desnoyers through a simple, unmotivated act of generosity, when he offers to give Cécile his English dictionary after meeting her and her mother in a book shop. In his first scenes, Roland spends time with Claire and Jeanne, two middle-aged women who seem to have a relationship of care to

the young man, and treat him with the mixed affection and disapproval which might characterise a relationship between family members. While Roland's failure in work, life and romance dominate their conversations, the male character does not dominate these scenes visually. Demy often captures the three in balanced, still compositions: through reasonably long takes the camera moves around the café and settles on two- and three-shots of Roland, Claire and Jeanne in different arrangements, usually at roughly the same distance from the camera (fig. 7 a-b). Close-ups are distributed evenly between the three characters. In those shots in which Roland takes up more space in the frame than Claire or Jeanne, Demy uses focus, or camera movement, to draw the viewer's eye to Claire or Jeanne as they busy themselves. Demy seems as interested in the quiet activity of two middle-aged women as the various woes of a bored young man.

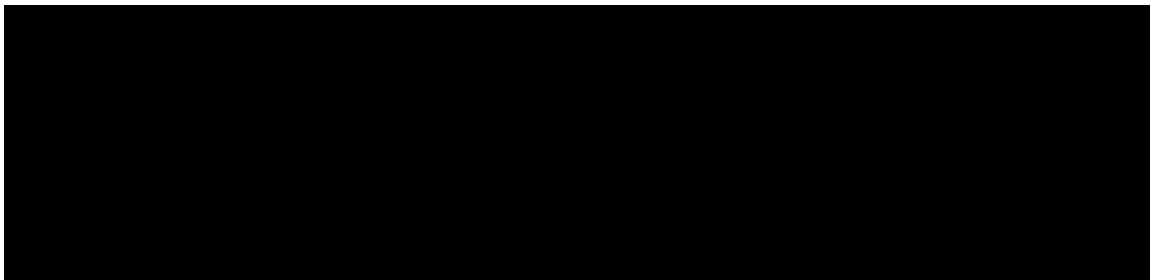


Fig. 7 a-b.

Roland's subordination on screen resonates with the romantic, social and professional mediocrity he embodies throughout the film. He is, particularly interestingly, unsuccessful with women. Most New Wave films 'systematically emphasize the sexual dimension of male behaviour', and most New Wave men are shown to have successful sexual encounters with women (Sellier 2008, 96). Roland's lack of sexual and romantic interest in, or success with women, places him in an interesting position relative to New Wave men: he shares their existential boredom and their lack of professional success, but not their overdetermined heterosexuality.

When Lola invites Franky to her apartment at the beginning of their date, the scene is filmed in one smooth take with the camera gliding around the interior space keeping the two characters both in the frame at the same time wherever possible. These fluid, lyrical camera movements and the shot's bright natural light and romantic music suggest carefree romance and fun, and the two characters are happy and at ease. When Roland goes home with Lola, by contrast, the two are captured in separate shots, such that the space feels more fractured and the figures less connected. There is none of the feeling of ease and intimacy which the earlier scene expresses so effectively. After his dinner with Lola, Roland declines to go to see her perform at the cabaret, suggesting perhaps a lack of sexual interest or an unwillingness to show sexual interest in the way Lola's usual audience of sailors do. Roland's romantic failure, as well as his entire lack of male friends, place him outside those few institutions—male friendship and heterosexual romance—valorised by New Wave film.

When Roland remarks, in reference to the works of art Jeanne paints at the café, 'I have no works to produce. I'm a loser', it is tempting to read his comment as speaking to a wider sense in which Roland is not productive. He appears to be deeply uninterested in the future, in a career, in marriage and procreation. Clearly, he shares this lack of interest in the future, if not his lack of sexual interest in women, with the young, male heroes of other New Wave films, who are also profoundly at odds with society but whose heterosexuality is endlessly restated through their dealings with women. In including in his narrative a handsome, bored young man, but overemphasising his social alienation and lack of sexual success, Demy in *Lola* queers the New Wave hero.

La Baie des Anges

La Baie des Anges, released in early 1963, was made late in or after the period of the New Wave, depending on which critic you consult. Films such as Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963), a literary adaptation using colour photography and starring Brigitte Bardot, and Truffaut's *Jules et Jim*, another literary adaptation set in the early twentieth century, testify to a diminishing interest in New Wave practices among core New Wave directors during this period. Demy's film, however, still boasts a New Wave production context and aesthetics, as a recent article by Richard Neupert (2016) details. In Jean-Pierre Berthomé's biography, Demy describes the conception, writing and filming of *La Baie des Anges* being accomplished quickly and without setbacks, very much unlike most of his other films. The script was written in a few days, the film was to be made cheaply in black-and-white, and he quickly found a producer (Paul-Edmond Decharme) and secured the participation of Jeanne Moreau, who had liked *Lola* and wanted to work with Demy (134). The film was shot in six weeks in real hotel rooms and casinos, with real casino croupiers (Waldron 2015, 34).

Jeanne Moreau's role as Jacqueline Demaistre in *La Baie des Anges* and its relation to her persona as a star of the New Wave has received surprisingly little critical scrutiny. Her co-star, Claude Mann, was a complete unknown when Demy cast him, and there is little written about him in any critical or biographical text on Demy's cinema. In Agnès Varda's *L'Univers de Jacques Demy*, the actor states in an interview that the part of Jean was his first job after acting school. He went on to have an undistinguished but steady career on television and in supporting roles in films. René Gilson in *Cinéma 63* noted his resemblance to Jean-Paul Belmondo, and it is safe to surmise that he was cast because he looks like a generically handsome New Wave leading man and perhaps because of his total absence of previous known work (Gilson 1963, 114). Mann's non-

celebrity suits Jean, whom Demy described as ‘mediocre and prudent’, and who is struggling against the inevitability of living an unremarkable life as a bank employee and head of a family (Mardore 1963).

Paratext and publicity

The magazine *Cinémonde* printed a narrativisation of *La Baie des Anges* around the time of its release. Stripped of moving images and sound, it becomes an only slightly unconventional love story about an unworldly young bank clerk, Jean Fournier (Mann), and a glamorous, somewhat older woman, Jackie Demaistre (Moreau), who has left her husband and child in order to dedicate herself to gambling. After Jean is introduced to roulette by his colleague Caron (Paul Guers) he leaves his disapproving father (Henri Nassiet) and travels to Nice where he meets Jackie. The two go home together that night, fall for each other and start gambling together. Jackie’s addiction to gambling presents problems for the couple, and as he leaves her to return to his more stable life in Paris she ‘gets up and runs towards him, trembling, happy’, leaving the roulette table behind forever and giving herself over to love instead⁸. The *Cinémonde* piece, whose author clearly drew heavily on publicity text and images, is entitled ‘Jeanne Moreau loses and, finally, wins the right to be loved’. Its subheading emphasises Moreau’s glamorous costumes and Mann’s ‘insolent’ good looks, suggesting that the piece is addressed to an imagined readership of heterosexual women.

Popular magazines and newspapers other than *Cinémonde* also published features which publicised the film as a steamy romance, with romanticised accounts of

⁸ Gilles Durieux, *Cinémonde*, no date, unpaginated.

the film's narrative and images of its attractive stars, to anticipate its release⁹. All of these articles showed some degree of interest in Moreau's costumes and styling, always mentioning her platinum blonde hair, and many also emphasise Claude Mann's handsomeness. They were illustrated with publicity shots of Moreau and Mann in postures suggesting intimacy and romance. These images are taken from an angle which never appears in the film: Jackie and Jean face the camera, which is tilted slightly upwards and narrowly frames the pair from the waist up. In both Jean is standing close behind Jackie, and they are embracing affectionately. Their faces and bodies are lit by bright sunlight, and the images are invariably captioned with gushing statements about the stars' beauty.

The publicity images suggest a sexual intimacy and a harmony in the relationship between the film's two characters which does not exist in Demy's moving images. In fact, the descriptions of the narrative content of *La Baie des Anges* in these texts are simultaneously accurate and wildly misleading. Whilst it is true that *La Baie des Anges* is unmistakably the story of a couple, it is, perhaps even more so than *Lola*, rife with ambivalence about heterosexual romance. Demy's script and direction, the film's editing, and Michel Legrand's music open the narrative out to divergent readings as it unfolds and suggest that the couple is not truly experiencing love and desire, even as they perform the rituals of heterosexual courtship. Jackie and Jean catch one another's eye over the roulette table, go out for dinner and dancing, sleep together, travel together, and agree to abandon their anti-social vice and move together to a place—Paris—associated in the film with stability and grown-up responsibilities. Through all these romantic milestones, however, the sincerity of their relationship is

⁹ I accessed these in the form of clippings with no publication, date or author, in the file KOVAKS 70-B14, 13 (2/3) at the Bibliothèque du cinéma in Paris

undermined by Demy's visual and musical choices, and by the script, such that what is in fact presented is an unconvincing shell of a relationship.

It is my contention that although it was promoted with images of and a story about a happy, sexually intimate heterosexual couple, *La Baie des Anges* is haunted by phobic cultural tropes about homosexuality. Jackie, Jean, and Jean's colleague Caron are all to some degree isolated and secretive, at odds with their families, and consumed by what is presented as an antisocial and destructive passion. Jackie and Jean have both fled from oppressive or insufficiently fulfilling family situations: Jean from his father, and Jackie from her husband and child. Demy himself was circumspect about the romance and eroticism of the film, and suggested that the couple were bonded by 'vice' rather than love. In a June 1963 interview with Philippe Pilard for *Image et son*, he described the film thus:

It's a love story without love, or at least it is for three quarters of the film. And what interested me precisely was a relationship between a man and a woman which is established in a way which is very out of the ordinary. They are attracted by something other than love. They end up sharing a room not because of physical desire or an attraction of personalities, but simply because they have the same vice (Pilard 1963, 41).

Demy's remarks are consonant with the film's constant undermining of the romance and supposed sexual desire of the couple, and gesture interestingly towards other reasons why a man and a woman might form a partnership. My analysis of *La Baie des Anges* focuses on how Demy's direction and Michel Legrand's music deromanticise the couple even as they are going through the motions of heterosexual courtship, thus gesturing towards different reasons why a man and a woman might form a partnership;

and how Jeanne Moreau's performance and her wardrobe and styling modify her star image to emphasise style over sexuality and trouble her association with the 'natural', 'authentic' womanhood for which she was considered desirable.

The heterosexual couple

In *La Baie des Anges*, as in future Demy films such as *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*, the heterosexual couple is presented as a pre-existing structure into which men and women fit themselves, perhaps uncomfortably, rather than a natural state. *La Baie des Anges* is a detailed portrait of one heterosexual couple: excepting a brief appearance by Caron when Jackie and Jean are in Monte Carlo, the film has no other named character after its fourteenth minute. The film follows Jackie and Jean in and out of hotel rooms and casinos, from Nice to Monte Carlo and back, and through high and low points in their relationship which are always accompanied or even caused by corresponding changes in their fortunes at the casino. Rodney Hill's explanation for their pairing is that 'He falls in love with her, but she seems incapable of loving anyone' (Hill 2008, 391). This is borne out in scenes in which Jean appears genuinely attached to Jackie, and dismayed by her refusal to commit. Equally, however, Demy's direction underscores a general lack of chemistry between the two, and creates a bleak, volatile atmosphere around their relationship.

While Jean and Jackie's courtship follows acceptable channels, the risky, anti-social and unacceptable is always present in the form of gambling. It threatens to isolate them from their families—Jackie has already left hers—and prevent their development into mature, employed adults existing in a family unit. Jean's father's warning that he could end up destitute and alone like his gambling friend Ripert threatens exactly this.

In the figure of the sad, lonely, perpetually immature gambler we can see clear echoes of another figure, a culturally constructed stereotype of the gay man. It is partly the figure of the ‘sad young man’ whom Richard Dyer has described, who is melancholy, isolated, and threatens to fail to become a ‘successful, mature adult male’ (Dyer 2001, 128). Demy’s visual presentation of Jean often sees him half-dressed and still, sometimes reclining alone in bed or on the beach, apparently overwhelmed by the predicament he finds himself in (fig. 8 a-b). He bears a superficial resemblance to Dyer’s assembled images of sad, pale, languid young men. Other figures loom: the mixed-gender couple who do not desire one another; the young man rejected by his family; the man who goes out alone at night and lies about it to his wife.

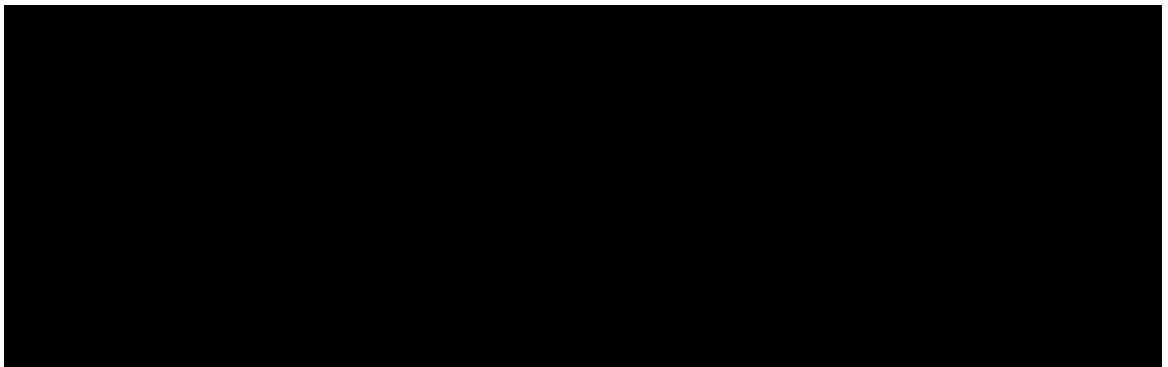


Fig. 8 a-b.

The film’s scenes of romance and seduction are marred by the constant presence, visually and in the narrative, of the destabilising vice: gambling. In the scene in which Jackie and Jean meet and are established visually as a couple, gambling is inserted as a third party in their relationship. The first time they meet over a roulette wheel, the two are manoeuvred into positions of increasing familiarity and intimacy, through the movements of the actors and through increasingly close framing. Once Jean and Jackie have exchanged words and placed another bet, Demy starts to cut between close-ups of the each of them, and then introduces close-ups of the squares of the table they are betting on, and of the spinning roulette wheel, to alternate with the two faces.

After a win, Jean sits next to Jackie and together they occupy most of the frame, looking for the first time like a potential romantic pairing (fig. 9a). With another spin of the wheel, the film's main theme, 'Le Jeu', a romantic melody played simultaneously on two pianos, begins, and Demy uses dissolves to transition between close-ups of Jean and Jackie's faces, the squares of the table, and the roulette wheel. The dissolves superimpose images of Jean and Jackie onto the roulette table (fig. 9b). Thus, the roulette wheel and the table are inserted into the visual composition of this new couple. The montage, which condenses time, suggests them getting carried away by their emotions, and the music suggests blossoming romantic sentiment, but both could also equally refer to the thrill of gambling, and winning. The thrill and risk of gambling are now a third party their partnership.

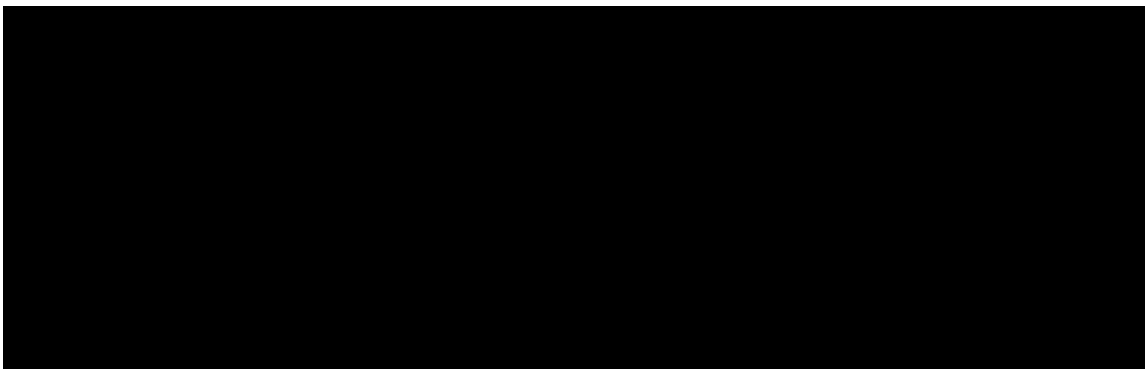


Fig. 9 a-b.

The visual style which is used to establish the two characters as a couple—I am referring to the very short shots, dissolves, and sometimes close-ups—returns in moments when the two are either winning at roulette or spending the money they have won. The romantic theme 'Le Jeu' also returns in scenes of high emotion, whether they depict romance, consumption or gambling. In the narrative, in the soundtrack, and in Demy's images, romance and money end up inseparable, such that when Jackie and Jean are happy it is never simply because they are in love but always also, perhaps more so, because they are succeeding as gamblers. A different visual and sound style are used

in scenes in which they are losing at roulette, or are being cruel to one another, or both: the style of these scenes is consistently sober and discomfiting, characterised by long takes (up to two minutes), loud diegetic sound and no music, with the actors often positioned with their backs to the camera.

Sellier writes that New Wave filmmakers explored sexual relationships ‘as explicitly as was permitted under the censorship of the time’, as a reaction to the ‘familialism, birth-rate panic, and...repression of contraceptive methods’ of their political moment (Sellier 2008, 6). This is plainly not the case with Demy. Sex is implied but elided in *La Baie des Anges*: represented, as it is in other Demy films, with a fade to black on Jackie and Jean embracing at night, and a fade-in the next morning. Through this ellipsis, Demy declines to provide evidence that Jackie and Jean are attracted to one another, or experience a moment’s happiness away from the casino. Without a representation of sex, what remains is the preceding scene, with its almost realist aesthetic (low lighting and grainy photography, bad sound recording and resulting inaudible dialogue) and bleak narrative content; and the following one, during which Jackie appears breezy and unchanged, and Jean appears troubled. These scenes have none of the eroticism implied by the film’s publicity images or press coverage; they intimate, through dialogue and through their visual style, that the characters are sad.

The ending of *La Baie des Anges*, like the ending of *Lola*, draws on well-worn tropes from Hollywood romance films. It is what James MacDowell terms a ‘final couple’ ending, and includes one character (Jean) running through the streets to catch another (Jackie) before it is too late; a last-minute change of heart; and a man and a woman walking away from the camera arm-in-arm as the screen fades to black. In *Happy Endings in Hollywood Cinema* (2014), MacDowell discusses the terrible critical

reputation such endings have. He writes that they are thought to be homogeneous and conservative, and are frequently described as ‘predictable’, ‘standard’ or ‘clichéd’ (Macdowell 2014, 5-6). When they are praised by film scholars, it is often because they are deemed ‘unmotivated’, or to appear ‘tacked-on’, and then presumed to have the potential to open up ruptures in the film’s ideologically suspect content. Critical responses to the ending of *La Baie des Anges* conform to MacDowell’s arguments. While popular magazines rewrote it as a moment of high romance¹⁰, various highbrow journals argued that it was too absurd, and therefore exemplified the penchant for irony which Demy had already expressed in *Lola* (Bozy 1963; Sadoul 1963). More recently, Darren Waldron argues that the ending’s extreme brevity and narrative improbability create a rupture in the film’s narrative content, casting doubt on the survival of Jackie and Jean’s relationship (Waldron 2015, 37).

The ending is certainly jarringly improbable. Given the near-total lack of chemistry between the two leads, the large mediating role played in their relationship by gambling in terms of its visual presentation as well as within the narrative, and Jackie’s declaration a few scenes earlier that she will never stop gambling, the idea that the pair’s embrace outside the casino is the start of a wonderful life together is very difficult to swallow. Demy’s also makes various editing and directorial choices which undermine the romance the scene might have had. The shots of Jackie trying to get rid of Jean so she can gamble in peace are longer than those of her running after him and uniting with him outside the casino. Her exit from the casino appears even more brief because of the quick pace created by the editing and the lightning-fast serialised images of Moreau running past a line of mirrors. Jackie and Jean’s final embrace is filmed in a

¹⁰ As in the aforementioned features in popular magazines with an implicitly female readership, accessed in the file KOVAKS 70-B14, 13 (2/3) at the Bibliothèque du cinéma in Paris.

long shot, through a set doors which frame the action but also separate the viewer from it, thus stripping their reunion and their kiss of much of the romance and finality it could have had.

The extreme implausibility of Jackie and Jean staying together, however, and the scene's extreme conventionality, represent not a rupture within the narrative, but an element of continuity with the presentation of their romantic relationship throughout the film. The ending is the final touch to a consistent discourse in the film which suggests that their romance is only an imitation of romance. While earlier scenes suggest this by taking the romance out of their relationship with a 'realist' film style involving intrusive diegetic sound, low lighting or poor sound recording, the ending does this by leaning on artifice rather than realism and showing the spectator a heavily edited, distancing version of a Hollywood 'happy ending'.

Failed, doomed and/or loveless heterosexual partnerships like Jackie and Jean's are a consistent presence in Demy's films. While *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* has received various queer readings which map familiar narratives about homosexuality and the closet onto Geneviève and Guy's embattled, secret, and ultimately impossible relationship, Philippe Colombe's 'L'Étrange Demy-monde' (1998) being exemplary, *La Baie des Anges* has altogether received very little critical scrutiny. Those critics who do question the plausibility of its ending go no further in their analysis and do not politicise the fragile veneer of heterosexual happiness the film offers.

La Baie des Anges is, and is not, about heterosexual love. The narrative draws on the Orpheus myth, but various visual nods to Cocteau's *Orphée*—the series of mirrors leading into the casino which nod at Cocteau's special effects, and the 'male models posed like statuary' in the background of a beach scene (Hill 2008, 392)—

suggest that Cocteau's interpretation of the myth, rather than the myth itself, is its main intertext. This situates the film within gay film culture, as Demy's casting of Jean Marais would do for *Peau d'âne*. Equally, Demy grafts a Hollywood-style 'final couple' ending onto his dark narrative, invoking well-worn representations of heterosexual romance and suggesting that such romance might be a mere fantasy. The compulsion to gamble is the factual explanation in the film for the characters' troubled relationship; socially unacceptable sexual desire, however, can be proposed as a much more familiar and emotionally resonant explanation for why Jean and Jackie need one another even though their love is not sexual, or why Caron lies to his wife, or why Jean's traditional father is so appalled by his gambling. Thus as Demy centres the heterosexual couple in *La Baie des Anges*, and its paratext and publicity makes much of the couple, so he also invests it with queer sadness—a sadness to do with the impossibility of finding love, with keeping secrets, and never getting what you want—and suggests that there could be a stifling inadequacy in heterosexual love.

Denaturalising Jeanne Moreau

Ginette Vincendeau argues in *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema* that Jeanne Moreau's persona as a star of New Wave films in the late 1950s and early 1960s was associated with the values of authenticity and 'naturalness', intellectualism, and a controlled sexuality which positioned her in opposition to Brigitte Bardot (Vincendeau 2000, 121-125). Although she had extensive training as a theatre actor, Moreau underwent a 'rebirth' in her early films with Louis Malle, *Ascenseur pour l'échaffaud/Elevator to the Gallows* (1957) and *Les Amants/The Lovers* (1958). She

started to work in a more informal fashion with young directors, and became strongly associated with the New Wave (123).

Moreau's usual wardrobe, hair and make-up in her New Wave films are a constitutive part of her persona. Her hair was a natural brown colour, her clothes were demure, expensive-looking but not too sexy, and she occasionally appeared on film apparently without make-up. Geneviève Sellier highlights Moreau's role as Jeanne Tournier in *Les Amants* as being particularly emblematic of her association with the natural: after her revelatory sexual experience she appears 'stripped of makeup and any artifice of dress, her hair floating and her body hidden under an ample billowing white nightgown, an apparition beneath the moon...an image of femininity cleansed of all the impurities of the real world' (Sellier 2008, 188). Reviewers affirmed the lack of artifice in the performance by describing her as '[f]reed', 'naked', 'laid bare'; the reviewer in *Libération* wrote that Moreau was 'utterly complete, as though she were not playing Jeanne but living Jeanne, being Jeanne'.

Moreau's style, performance and character in *La Baie des Anges* run counter to almost all of the characteristics Vincendeau and Sellier describe in their chapters on Moreau, and the film can therefore be considered to constitute an exception to the accepted portrait of Moreau as a New Wave star. Jackie's distinctness from Moreau's other roles, in terms of her physical appearance and personal characteristics, provides a critical commentary on the construction of her star image and the supposedly authentic, performance-less performances she was thought to give in New Wave films. Above all, it is the qualities of naturalness and authenticity which Jackie is missing.

Many critics in newspapers and film journals complained that Demy had made Moreau ugly by having her hair dyed platinum blonde for the role, implicitly aligning

the constructed ‘naturalness’ of Moreau’s earlier roles with beauty and this more clearly artificial femininity with ugliness¹¹. Moreau’s beauty in her earlier roles was indeed allied with a putative naturalness which Demy makes no attempt to reproduce. In *La Baie des Anges*, attention is consistently drawn to Jackie’s wardrobe as she comments on the state of her stockings, hangs out laundry, and asks for Jean’s help with fastening zips or choosing between dresses (fig. 11a). In *Jules et Jim*, the voiceover narration informs the viewer that Moreau’s Catherine strikes the two title characters for her resemblance to a primitive statue, and the viewer’s first glimpse of Catherine stylistically recalls the heroes’ encounter with the same statue. Jackie does not have the ancient, eternal, primal beauty of a statue: her hair, wardrobe and gestures have a studied, artificial glamour which could have been copied from classical Hollywood or, as Jean suggests, a vamp from an American pulp novel.

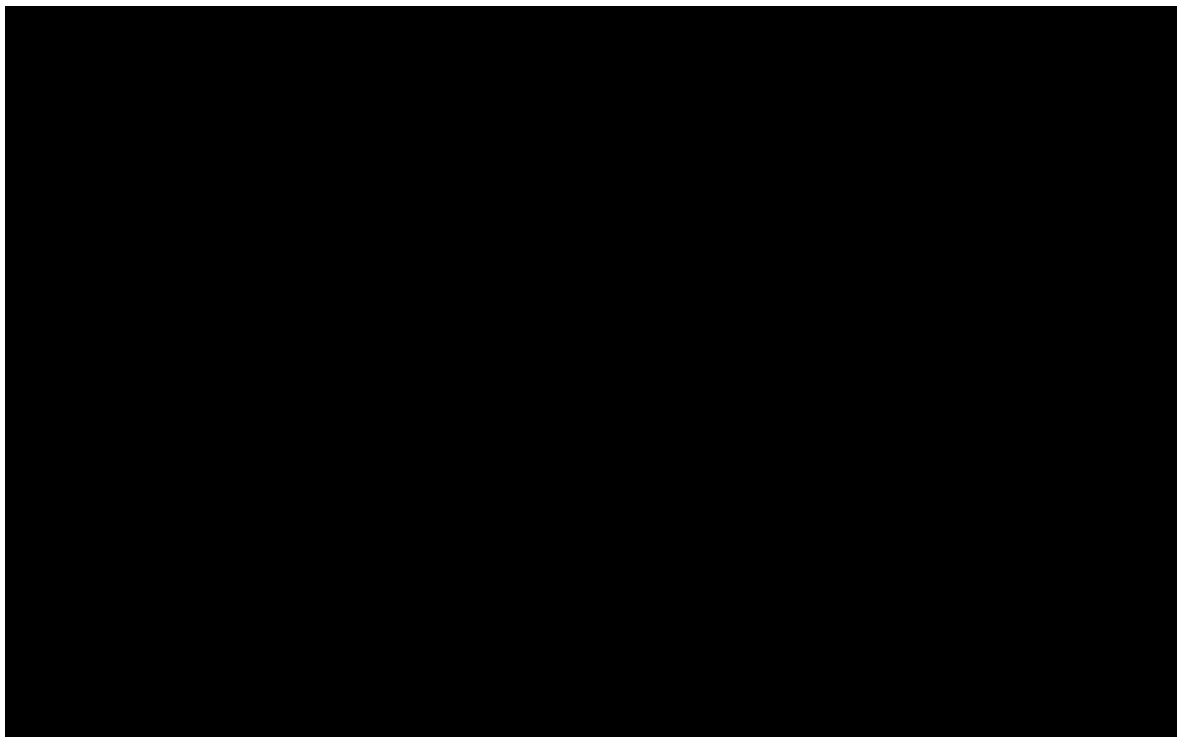


Fig. 11 a-d.

¹¹ The following all use variations on the verb *enlaidir* (to make ugly): Dupeyron 1963; Magnan 1963; Chauvet 1963; Garson 1963; Billard 1963, 116. In *Libération* Henry Magnan says that Demy’s photography ‘mangles’ Moreau.

Describing the glamour of Lana Turner's wardrobe in *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), Richard Dyer highlights the qualities of 'expensiveness' and 'inconvenience': that is, clothes that distinguish 'the wearer from those whose clothes have to permit labour' (Dyer 1992, 91). Dyer remarks that Turner's styling emphasises 'femininity (but one conceived not in terms of softness, but in terms of elaborateness, ornamentation, plasticity) and sheer impracticality, without connection with ordinary life' (92). Although *Lola* also calls the viewer to observe women's beauty rituals, in scenes in which women share make-up or discuss their costumes, Lola's wardrobe is convincingly that of a busy working mother. She is seen in her work clothes (the black basque), the trench coat she puts on over them in order to look respectable in the street, one simple white dress and a white jacket. By contrast, when Jackie comes into money she is shown gleefully buying several expensive and glamorous dresses designed by Pierre Cardin, with whom Moreau was famously romantically involved in the early 1960s (fig. 11b). These articles detach her from the world of work or 'ordinary life': they have impractical flourishes, such as an extravagant feather boa, and several of the dresses are so tight at the bottom that Jackie has to take tiny steps, creating what Waldron describes as a 'mincing walk' (Waldron 2015, 37). Because she is a gambler, however, poverty and 'ordinary life' are always around the corner, and Demy foregrounds the precarious and contingent nature of Jackie's glamour. She mentions several times that she has had to sell her jewellery, and when she and Jean lose everything in Monte Carlo she appears to have to sell her dresses too, and henceforth only wears the white skirt and jacket she is wearing when she meets Jean. Hence, while Moreau's beauty is supposedly a natural quality, Jackie's glamour is an effect of her fluctuating wealth.

Jackie appears to be aware at all times of her own iconicity and of the construction of her image through citation. There are several distinct moments in *La Baie des Anges* when Jackie/Moreau strikes and holds a pose, self-consciously and in collaboration with Demy's camera creating an iconic still image. Against the Monte Carlo hotel window with its view of the ocean, for example, she pauses with her back to the camera, sticks her hip out, and places her hand on her hat (fig. 11c); after a second she turns around, removes her sunglasses and pauses once again, as if aware of the camera framing her against the ocean. When told by Jean that she resembles a character from an American novel, a remark that reflects on Jackie's emulation of an existing model of femininity, Demy pulls focus swiftly from Jean in the background to Jackie in the foreground as she fixes her hair and puts one finger on her face in what is clearly supposed to be a disingenuous quizzical gesture, which she maintains for a few seconds (fig. 11d). Jackie's gestures and poses suggest the careful construction of an image, as if she herself is the star. It is the exact opposite of the image of freewheeling exuberance and risky, uncontrolled energy she incarnates in *Jules et Jim*, and almost as far from the somewhat plain, expensively dressed bourgeois woman she played in her early roles in Louis Malle films.

In a review of the film in *Cinéma 63*, René Gilson noted that Demy's attention to Jackie's costumes comes without 'erotic solicitation' (Gilson 1963, 113). Indeed, the way Demy directs and films Moreau emphasises style rather than sexuality. Jackie's femininity has qualities of what Joan Riviere describes as the 'masquerade' of womanliness: her fussy mannerisms, and the film's focus on her clothes and beauty routine pull the audience's focus away from the sexed materiality of her body to its changing surface. The viewer gains no access to her subjectivity, and are therefore aligned with Jean, who at several points appears sad that Jackie's strained cheer and

constant effort to appear to be living out a glamorous existence deny him access to her emotions. There is nothing natural about Jackie; there is also nothing natural about any other Moreau character, but Jackie's citational glamour and anxious, constant attention to the state of her hair, her stockings and her dresses bring the constructedness of her image to the fore. Demy's manipulation of Jeanne Moreau's star image thereby provides a commentary on the ideology of 'natural' womanly beauty around which other New Wave directors constructed Moreau's characters.

Conclusion

Neither *Lola* nor *La Baie des Anges* have been read as queer texts by any published article. They contain, nonetheless, elements of Demy's queer filmmaking practice which can be seen fully-formed in later films. *Lola*'s meandering and unhurried narrative, which focuses on evoking emotional states and broadening its network of relationships, results in a queer temporality, which does not look forward to a happier, more stable future. I will develop this argument about queer time and reproductive time in my discussion of *Model Shop*, in which time, to an even greater extent, goes nowhere and produces nothing. The representation of a heterosexual relationship as nice-looking but ultimately hollow in *La Baie des Anges* looks forward to *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*, which uses patterns, colours and music to suggest heterosexuality as a matter of fitting into a pre-existing structure. Finally, subtextual queer narratives would feature in many of Demy's future films, and some, such as *Parking*, would openly feature queer people and relationships.

As early as 1962, we see emerging a critical discourse which refers to Demy as a failure. In a 1962 interview in which he discusses the decline of the New Wave,

François Truffaut ponders the commercial failure of *Lola*, speculating that the post-synchronisation may have been responsible, or Demy's 'almost perverse sense of refinement' unfortunately produced an 'over-melodramatic melodrama' (Graham 1968, 102). It was common for reviews of *La Baie des Anges* to comment upon how long it had taken Demy to be able to make a second film, and one very disappointed critic suggested that Demy had made the film because he needed money, and thus had 'resigned himself to the "commercialisation" of his talent' (Rochereau 1963).

It is clear that contemporary critics found Demy's New Wave films impressive, but generically ambivalent and confusing. Their reviews tend to strip them of their complexity and mandate a simpler way of watching them. During this period, Demy acquired a reputation as an outsider, in terms of his filmmaking practice, his cinematic interests, and his sexuality and gender presentation. Discourses of compromise, failure, and unsuitability would follow him through his career, as we shall see in my discussion of *Model Shop* and *Parking*. In examining these films, among the least successful of Demy's career, I will seek to answer the question: what is queer about failure?

Chapter 3: Demy's failed films

After his death in October 1990, *Cahiers du cinéma* published a series of loving tributes to Jacques Demy. The long, lyrical obituary by Serge Toubiana discreetly skipped his less successful films in its description of his filmography, missing out *Model Shop*, *L'Événement le plus important depuis que l'homme a marché sur la lune*, *Parking*, and his three commissioned films, *The Pied Piper*, *Lady Oscar* and *La Naissance du jour* (Toubiana 1990, 4-5). In the same issue, a piece by Joël Magny analysed the themes and moods of many of Demy's films, in complete isolation from their often troubled production context or reception (Magny 1990, 34-36). An obituary in *Cinéma 90* said what most of the other published obituaries others did not: that he barely worked for ten years during the 1970s and early 1980s, that his last films, *Parking* and *3 places pour le 26*, were poorly received, and that he was, in fact, a marginal figure in French film culture throughout his career (Haustrate 1990, 2-4).

Agnès Varda's commemorative films about Demy, *L'Univers de Jacques Demy* and *Les Demoiselles ont eu 25 ans*, do not discuss his failures, only his triumphs, and emphasise above all the strong affective relationships which Demy's collaborators and fans have with his cinema. Since Demy's death in 1990, writing on the filmmaker has tended to emphasise magic, enchantment, childhood, and a personal 'universe', in discussing Demy's work, while sometimes also acknowledging that it is sad or bitter-sweet. The fact that Demy made only three successful films, and ten failures of various magnitudes, and spent many years completely unable to work, does not fit well into the 'enchanted world' of Jacques Demy.

When film critics, academics and other figures such as Varda do not discuss Demy's very embattled career, out of respect or because they do not wish to deal in biography, it means they cannot consider why a filmmaker such as Demy might struggle. I see Demy's failure as a queer failure, as I see his cinema as a queer body of work. Demy's films, in their styles, their narratives, and their modes of address, are off-kilter from dominant, heterosexual filmmaking culture, carry a different set of values, and have been marginalised accordingly. In contemporary press coverage of Demy's less successful films, furthermore, the critical and commercial failure of these films was explained by allusions to 'perversity' in his practice, or with suggestions that he was strange, in the wrong time and place, overly fussy, or an aesthete. Some of his protagonists could be described as failed subjects: individuals who reject the dominant culture, or whom the dominant culture has rejected. He also consistently made artistic decisions which pushed him towards the margins. The two films I analyse in this chapter, *Model Shop* and *Parking*, are the product of such decisions, and Demy looked back on them both with regret.

Scholars and biographers, who have shied away from the difficulties Demy faced in having his films made the way he wanted them, have elided a great deal of sadness and struggle from their accounts of his life and work. Recent queer theory instructs us not to look away from sadness, or failure, but to look again at how they challenge the dominant culture which demands that people pursue certain acceptable models of happiness and success. Jack Halberstam (2011) and Sara Ahmed (2010) argue that success (Halberstam) and happiness (Ahmed), as we currently conceive of them, are concepts which mandate certain kinds of behaviour, and orient human lives down restricted paths. They analyse and valorise art which represents failure, melancholia, sadness, and other negative affects. In looking at Demy's failure as

potentially disruptive or redemptive, I will not deny that it was painful to him, which it certainly was. I will, however, argue that being misunderstood, underappreciated and marginalised in a straight and masculinist culture is an important part of Demy's story. Demy's cinema can be fruitfully analysed by looking at how it thematises failure, sadness and vulnerability. I will look at *Model Shop* and *Parking*, films which Demy did not like, with their status as failed films in mind. I will consider why they are sad, what models of happiness and success they embrace and reject, why they may have resisted contemporary audiences, and how they may reflect on Demy's career.

The appearance, disappearance, and reappearance of a discourse which positions Demy as a failure is an interesting phenomenon in itself. As I have noted, this discourse emerges early in his career, with the release of *La Baie des Anges* in 1963. In 1964, Ginette Billard described Demy as 'too light for people to take seriously,' and his films as 'too pleasant, too full of grace' for the audience of the time (Billard 1964, 23). The extraordinary international success of 1964's *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* changed the dominant narrative around Demy for some time. The discourse of disappointment returns following the 1969 French release of *Model Shop*, made and set in Los Angeles, which arrived in France from the US trailing a terrible critical reception. In a particularly merciless and probably quite influential review in the *New Yorker* Pauline Kael lamented, 'It is so embarrassing when an artist's new work makes true what one has been denying about his earlier work' (Kael 1969, 124). The review suggested that perhaps Demy's films had always been bad, in ways that fans of his work—including herself—had been unwilling to recognise.

In 1982 the spectacular box office failure of *Une chambre en ville* placed Demy at the centre of a public debate about free speech and the role of film criticism, as film critics publicly urged their readers to support *Une chambre en ville* at cinemas. I will

describe this media event in greater detail in Chapter 4, as part of my commentary on *Une chambre en ville*. This public discussion of the film's very poor box office performance may have cemented Demy's reputation as someone who could not make a successful film. This reputation certainly pre-existed the debate, but was less conspicuous simply because Demy had largely vanished from public life. In 1981, for example, in anticipation of the release of *Une chambre en ville*, the journal *Cinéma 81* published an issue on Demy which included an editorial by Gaston Haustrate which laments that Demy had not worked in France for eight years, and almost pleads with the reader to reconsider his work (Haustrate 1981) ¹².

Demy was extraordinarily open about the fact that his career had stalled in a 1982 interview with *Cahiers du cinéma*, timed to accompany the release of *Une chambre en ville*. He expressed bitter incomprehension at the end of a decade during which he only succeeded in making three films, two of which (*Lady Oscar* and *La Naissance du jour*) had no theatrical release in France. He narrated the last ten years of his life, and detailed the mistakes he felt he had made to put himself in this position. He told the interviewer that he has been declining requests for interviews for years because he had had 'nothing but misfortune' and didn't want to talk about it; and that he had been turning down commissions because everything offered to him was terrible (Daney, Narboni and Toubiana 1982, 6). The *Cahiers* interviewer described him as 'exiled' in France. When asked about *Model Shop*, the only film he succeeded in making in Hollywood, Demy said:

¹² Haustrate paints almost too-vivid a picture of Demy's status as a pariah in the world of cinema, in particular when he describes a very poorly attended retrospective of his work in Angers (Haustrate 1981, 31).

I knew they were expecting a musical. I'd got my calculations wrong. Since I didn't have a total grasp of the language—I'd never spent more than a fortnight in America—I needed to see how the people lived, their habits, and I thought I'd make a small film, that I'd start with a really small thing when I could have made a real musical. That's where I really went wrong because once it's done, it's done. It's like a light bulb, you throw it out (Daney, Narboni and Toubiana 1982, 12).

Model Shop and *Parking* both concern failure, and also can be described as failures, in distinct ways. *Model Shop*, which Demy made with Columbia Pictures in 1968, is about a young man, George (Gary Lockwood), who has given up on his career as an architect and his relationship with his girlfriend and is waiting to be drafted to Vietnam. While driving around the city looking for the \$100 he needs to prevent his car from being repossessed he meets Lola (Anouk Aimée). Following the events of *Lola* she was left by Michel, and is working in a model shop, a studio in which men pay to take pictures of women. Demy described *Model Shop*, like *La Baie des Anges*, as 'love story without love', depicting a 'relationship stripped of all passion', thus affirming what is in fact amply clear within the film itself: that George and Lola are not in love, and that they have no hope for the future (Quinson 1969). The film had a mixed critical reception—largely negative in the US, largely positive in France—and was a box office failure internationally, but is now being rediscovered by critics and audiences who now appreciate its melancholy tone and outsider's perspective on the USA of the late 1960s. During his lifetime, Demy took to calling it 'Model Flop'¹³. In 1981 he told Gaston Haustrate in *Cinéma 81*, 'I don't like this film, I don't like the story it tells, I don't like

¹³ Demy jokes about this in an interview excerpted in *L'Univers de Jacques Demy*.

its tone and, ultimately, I don't know why I made it at that moment in my life' (Haustrate 1981, 43).

The narrative of *Parking* draws on the Orpheus myth, and is set in contemporary Paris, where Orphée (Francis Huster) is a rock star. Demy overemphasises his success throughout the film, and yet a very unconvincing vocal and acting performance by Huster, and the flat direction of the musical numbers, make Orphée's success as a rock star one of the film's main problems. *Parking* was critically panned, has attracted almost no academic criticism, and is ignored in most accounts of Demy's career, as if it had never been made. In fact, Demy effectively disowned the film: during an interview in the late 1980s Demy said of *Parking*, 'It is a film which didn't belong to me' (Clech, Strauss and Toubiana 1988, 61.)

Taken as a whole, Demy's cinema is challenging, inconsistent and significantly compromised by industrial and material constraints. The difficulties Demy had in working can be attributed directly to his films' resistance to heterosexual and patriarchal norms: their explicit or implicit invocation of queer experience, and their mixture of influences from high and low, and masculine-coded and feminine-coded culture. Even the decisions Demy regretted, such as the decision to make *Model Shop* rather than the musical the studio wanted from him, are part of a life spent resisting people's expectations. This chapter recognises and celebrates Demy's failure as a queer failure.

Model Shop

Model Shop has undergone something of a rediscovery in recent years. It was included in *Sight and Sound*'s 2007 list of '75 hidden gems', and it was the subject of a reconsideration by James Quandt in the same publication in the same year (Crouse

2007, 26; Quandt 2007, 10); it was released on DVD for the first time in the US in 2009, prompting reviews in *Sight & Sound* and *Cineaste* (Atkinson 2009, 88-89; Rapfogel 2009, 76); it was screened Il Cinema Ritrovato, a festival of neglected films, in Bologna in 2015; and in a 2014 episode of *Mad Men*, Don Draper is seen watching the film in a realistically empty cinema.

Quandt writes on the film, 'Jacques Demy's punishingly sad *Model Shop* deserves reconsideration more than any of his other so-called failures'. Indeed, *Model Shop* may be a more likely candidate for this reconsideration precisely because it is so sad. Among Demy's other "so-called failures", *Parking* has aged badly and is seriously aesthetically compromised by bad casting and a low budget; and *L'Événement* buries some of its more potentially subversive elements in light, observational humour, and thus was received as a toothless and largely unsuccessful comedy. *Model Shop* appears to please critics in part because it is so deadly serious. Jared Rapfogel in *Cinéaste* focuses his praise on the realistic characterisation of George, 'a young man alienated from his parents and his society, overwhelmed by the looming threat of the draft, and searching desperately for something he can not name'; and Quandt also emphasises the film's melancholy, dwelling on George's 'imminent death' and calling the film a 'dreamy, compressed requiem' (Quandt 2007, 10.) In this respect *Model Shop* is very modern, and the renewed appreciation for the film may be viewed in the context of a trend in melancholy, meandering films by American indie filmmakers such as Sofia Coppola, Noah Baumbach and Whit Stillman.

With its unconventional temporality and narrative form, and its unheroic male protagonist, *Model Shop* could be approached as a post-classical or 'new Hollywood' film, although it has not yet been studied in a critical text on new Hollywood. Demy had plenty to say about the experience of working in the post-classical studio system in a

1968 interview in *Cahiers*. He went into (almost too much) detail about various technical challenges and struggles with unions. He also suggested that even in 1968, even with the production code replaced with a ratings system and more control afforded to certain filmmakers, the studio was still institutionally resistant to artistic and technical change and fatally out of touch with young moviegoers' tastes (Delehay 1968, 43-52.) The array of dead Hollywood stars whose photos decorate the back wall of the photography shop George goes to twice can easily be read as a comment upon the death of the studio system which produced these stars¹⁴. I will return to the narrative, ideological and character incoherences and ambiguities in *Model Shop* which ally it to certain New Hollywood films produced in the years before and after it.

French reviewers were overwhelmingly positive about the film, but many noted its strangeness, or rather the strangeness of Demy making a series of bright, Hollywood-inspired musical films in France during the time of the New Wave, and then making a sombre, simple film in Hollywood when he had the resources to make a musical¹⁵. Looking back on the making of *Model Shop*, Agnès Varda commented on how Demy's choices affected the studio's response to the film:

I...saw that he wasn't doing what was expected of him. He could have made a musical comedy right away, with lots of resources, putting his career on the right track out there. He decided to make *Model Shop*...But the studio expected something else and has not taken the finished film seriously (Monterde 2011, 72.)

¹⁴ These stars are Jean Harlow, Gary Cooper, Marilyn Monroe, Spencer Tracey, Lionel Barrymore and Alan Ladd.

¹⁵ This point is made most insistently by Edoardo di Gregorio, who describes this quirk as an example of Demy's 'perversity' (di Gregorio 1970, 57). Several other reviewers describe Demy as working 'against the tide' of cinematic fashion (Cornand 1969, 116; Pierre 1969, 64).

As a result of the film's failure to meet artistic or commercial expectations, Demy was not able to work in Hollywood again. When he returned in the 1979 with ideas for projects, he received no support from the studios because, according to Varda, they "had not forgiven him his failure" (Varda 2013, 129). In addition to causing problems for Demy, *Model Shop* was not the career turning point it was hoped to be for its two American stars, who both represent two Hollywood 'near miss' stories. Columbia Pictures made Demy cast Gary Lockwood in *Model Shop* over his first choice, Harrison Ford, who at the time was not thought to be famous enough¹⁶. Lockwood appeared to the studio to be a star on the rise after his role in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), but *Model Shop* would turn out to be his only starring film role, after which he worked mostly on television. Alexandra Hay, who plays George's girlfriend Gloria, also seemed to have a promising career ahead of her when she took on the role in *Model Shop*. It ended up bring her biggest role as well, however; she subsequently 'turned to exploitation films and television' in the 1970s, and stopped working in the 1980s (Lisanti 2008, 91).

In addition to being a commercial failure, and representing a turning point in Demy's fortunes, *Model Shop* deals extensively in its narrative with social and professional failure. The section that follows will discuss several significant aspects of this failure: unemployment and marginalised or unacknowledged work; the film's circular, repetitive narrative and non-classical temporality; its use of sound and space to suggest vulnerability in its characters; and a protagonist, and a narrative, which queer classical narrative temporality by going nowhere.

¹⁶ Varda dwells on this piece of trivia in *L'Univers de Jacques Demy*, and shows screen test footage she shot of Ford. She remarks that the film would have had a very different career if it had starred Ford, although it is equally true that Ford may have had a very different career if he had been in *Model Shop*.

The narrative of *Model Shop* is linear. The film also establishes a timeline between 1961 and 1968 by invoking characters from Demy's previous films—Frankie, Yvon and Michel from *Lola*, and Jackie from *La Baie des Anges*—and indicating, through Lola's dialogue, what has become of them. Nonetheless, this narrative has an unusual and distinctly post-classical temporality, which matches its unusual protagonist: both are aimless. *Model Shop*'s narrative is paratactic: it comprises a series of events, happening one after the other, which do not necessarily follow one another logically and do not build to a climax. George's repetitive car journeys through Los Angeles are motivated, at least at first, by George needing to borrow \$100 to prevent his car from being repossessed. In Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), upon which the narrative of *Model Shop* clearly draws, the eventual loss of Joe Gillis's (William Holden) car traps him in Norma Desmond's (Gloria Swanson) house, and precipitates a downward spiral for Gillis which ends with his death. In *Model Shop*, however, the threatened repossession of the car is one of several narrative intrigues which turn out to be redundant after George is informed that he has been drafted to Vietnam and decides that he is going to die.

This type of narrative, not pulled along by cause and effect but rather consisting of an 'episodic series of events' which in the end amount to nothing, is typical of New Hollywood films (Berliner 2010, 7). In a classical narrative, according to Thomas Elsaesser, each scene fits together 'like cogs in a clockwork', and each image implies its own past and future in a chain of cause-and-effect (Elsaesser 2004, 280). Post-classical narratives have both a different structure and a consequently different temporality. These narratives indicate a 'fading confidence in being able to tell a story—with a beginning, a middle and an ending' (Elsaesser 2004, 280). One event, one moment,

does not necessarily suggest the next, nor does it necessarily have any relationship to the narrative past. The narrative is also not aimed at any clear resolution. The trajectory of New Hollywood or post-classical films such as *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967) and *Five Easy Pieces* (Bob Rafelson, 1971)¹⁷, as well as of *Model Shop*, is towards moments whose ultimate consequences are unclear.

As well as the lens of New Hollywood scholarship, we can view *Model Shop* through the lens of recent queer theory on temporality. Post-classical, obtuse narrative forms like the one in *Model Shop* operate on what we can term queer narrative time. Jack Halberstam has described queer time as a conception of time without ‘the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance’ (Halberstam 2005, 6.) He writes that ‘reproductive time’ organises daily life and work around an ‘imagined set of children’s needs’, and entails a routine of rising early in the morning, working during the day, and settling down to sleep at night. Operating over longer periods, ‘the time of inheritance’ is a conception of generational time ‘within which values, wealth, goods, and morals are passed through family ties from one generation to the next’, ensuring the continuity of the nation and its values (5.)

We can extend the concept of queer time to describe to a narrative temporality without the classical logic of efficiency and progress, which is intimately related to capitalism and heterosexual futurity. Classical narrative time entails the effacement of the labour of filming, performing and editing; the smooth, unquestionable progress towards narrative closure; a narrative centred on characters overcoming problems and making moral or other personal progress; and a conclusion which may well gesture

¹⁷ *Five Easy Pieces* was written by Carol Eastman, who worked on the *Model Shop* script. The two films have much in common, including their ambiguous endings, and their unpleasant male protagonists with put-upon girlfriends.

towards a stable future, possibly in the form of marriage¹⁸. The nonsensical, circular and repetitive time of *Model Shop*, which sees nobody advance towards stability, adulthood or coupledness, is a challenge to narratives of progress which describe a journey to adulthood involving stability, economic productivity, heterosexuality and biological reproduction, and longevity.

Jean-Baptiste Thoret highlights the circularity and repetitiveness of the narrative of *Model Shop*, and argues that this aspect of the film is foregrounded in its opening credit sequence (Thoret 2013, 137.) The film opens on a shot of a house next to an oil drill (fig. 1a); the camera then starts to track backwards and takes off from the ground. It is quickly grounded again, however, and comes to rest outside George and Gloria's house, producing a still image very much like the first, with the drill on the left and the house on the right (fig. 1b). This opening shot, with its quickly thwarted promise of escape, functions as an analogy for the film's entire narrative, which offers various different narrative intrigues—the search for \$100, the mystery of Lola's visit to the mansion, a new romance—but ends up back where it started.

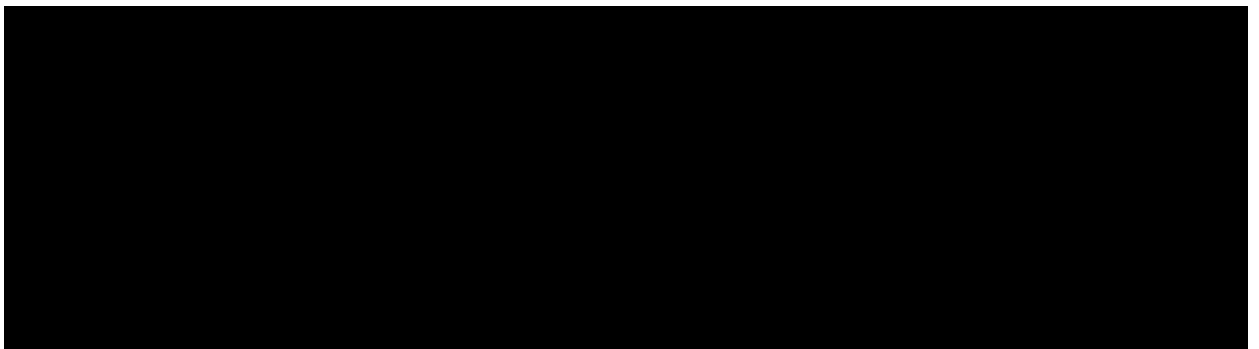


Fig. 1 a-b.

George's circular journey around Los Angeles also contains various dead ends: stops on the way which do nothing to advance the narrative and have no particular

¹⁸ These are the broad trends in classical narratives against which New Hollywood narratives were arguably reacting, and it is certainly not the case that all classical narratives prize narrative efficiency and closure above all.

dramatic value, such as his short stay in a pool bar where he puts music on the jukebox, orders a hamburger and a coffee which he does not consume, and leaves after seeing Lola walk by. Lola's visit to a mansion in Beverly Hills also challenges classical narrative convention. Lola's presence there appears at first as a mystery to be solved by George, because it is unusual for narrative information to be given for no purpose. The briefly-glimpsed woman living in a large mansion again evokes *Sunset Boulevard*, which suggests new potential directions for the narrative. On the contrary, however, George and the viewer never find out who lives in the mansion or why Lola went there, and it soon ceases to matter as George receives his draft notice.

The temporality of *Model Shop* reflects the subjective experience of its protagonist. Demy does not use legible editing techniques such as fades in and out to help the viewer follow the film's scheme of time. The film covers 24 hours in George's life, during the film's 90-minute running time, with no obvious ellipsis except overnight, and with no attempt made to account for most of the unrepresented time. The film opens on George and Gloria in the morning, follows George around the city in an unbroken chain of journeys and stops with no stylistic device or narrative exposition to indicate that time has been omitted. There is only one clear ellipsis, around George and Lola's sexual activity, denoted in the same way as in *Lola*, *La Baie des Anges* and *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*: by a fade to black, and a fade-in on a different scene. This appears to take us to the morning, when George drives home; by the time he calls Lola's house, minutes later, Lola has left for France.

This scheme of time does not mimic the time of classical Hollywood, nor does it reflect time as it is structured and experienced day-to-day. It is a subjective temporality, clearly influenced by George's unemployment, indifference to life, general lack of forward momentum and hopelessness. George experiences the film's series as events as

they come along, rarely appearing moved by anything; his trajectory is not towards stability and adulthood, but apparently towards death. The protagonist of a New Hollywood film is not always the agent of the narrative, as a classical protagonist is. He is likely to be morally ambivalent, disaffected and lost, and ‘unmotivated’, as Elsaesser puts it: he is characterised by a lack of drive and lack of interest in the world, and this lack of drive is mirrored in the narrative’s lack of logical causality and direction (Elsaesser 2004).

Model Shop is also, like other post-classical narrative films, extremely ideologically oblique. It does have any clear stance on its political moment. In *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, Robin Wood describes the ideological inconsistency of New Hollywood films, ‘in which the drive toward the ordering of experience has been visibly defeated’ (Wood 2003, 42.) Whether or not Demy was trying to achieve any kind of ordering of experience in *Model Shop*—if he was, we can certainly say that he failed—the film is certainly, to paraphrase Wood, a work that does not know what it wants to say. This is, again, thanks in large part to its focus on George, who appears unmoved by everything and whose opinions are hard to discern. He never expresses any political criticism of the war in Vietnam, only the fear that it will kill him. Throughout the film he interacts with people in various recognisable subcultural groups: the hippies in the group Spirit, who play themselves and recorded the film’s soundtrack, and his intellectual friends at the *Free Press*. Yet, he is an isolated figure with no obvious political or cultural allegiances and no subversive views. This is expressed in part through his clothes, a blue t-shirt, blue jeans and blue sneakers, which are as generic as possible so as not to align him with the film’s secondary cast of subversives. If *Model Shop* is anti-war, this is only expressed in relation to the danger that the

Vietnam War poses to George, as in *Les Parapluies* the violence of the Algerian War only exists in relation to the danger it poses to Guy.

Fictional depictions of outsiderhood and alienation, including in New Hollywood films such as *Five Easy Pieces* and *The Graduate*, often depict social outsiders living more authentic lives than the people around them. The protagonists of these films—young, good-looking, charismatic men with social and educational capital—are shown to experience a picturesque sort of alienation. George, by contrast, rejects society's demands—for example, to be economically productive, or to be in love—and yet he never seems to be having any fun. This is partly due to Lockwood's performance: James Quandt aptly describes him as 'inert and aloof, with the locked-down lack of affect of a man convinced of his own superiority and separateness' (Quandt 2007, 10). Rather than being coolly detached or nihilistic, however, George is simply quite uninteresting, and often quite unpleasant. *Model Shop* thereby demonstrates something that Demy may already have learned: that social alienation and failure can be painful, frustrating, and boring.

Gendered work

George's status as a highly educated but unemployed man in debt motivates the narrative of *Model Shop*, and his idleness is the condition of possibility for a film which follows him for 24 hours on a repetitive and ultimately circular series of journeys. Cumulatively, these journeys overemphasise that he is at a total loose end, unemployed in two senses: he does not have a job, and he also has nothing in particular to do with his time. Although George's economic inactivity and social inertia structure *Model Shop*, the film has many scenes of other people working, and their work clearly enables

George's inactivity. As we discover in an early exchange with Gloria, he recently left his job at an architecture firm because he feels he is too highly educated to be doing underappreciated work. He is therefore being supported financially by Gloria, who pays the bills in their house, and by his mother.

The crux of the tension between George and Gloria is revealed as they fight over breakfast in an early domestic scene. Gloria says that George has "ideas", but no drive, while George accuses Gloria of having too much 'ambition', in a tone which implies bad morals. As Gloria cultivates relationships men who work in the media, with hopes of being discovered and cast in a film, the idea of the casting couch suggests itself. Lola and her roommate Barbara, who appears in one scene but is referred to several other times, also both work in a grey area between entertainment and sex work, as a model in the model shop and a stripper respectively. The men in *Model Shop* do, or aspire to do, creative work as writers, musicians and architects; its women work with their bodies, doing domestic work and childcare or earning money in the aforementioned grey area.

Demy critically juxtaposes the two terms in this binary—masculine labour and feminine labour—in a scene set at the house of George's friend Jay, a member of the band Spirit, to whom he goes to borrow \$100. While Jay plays the piano for George, watched over by a large poster of the Beatles, his partner Mary enters carrying their baby, pours coffee for the two men, and leaves, turning to look back into the room as she closes the door. She appears practiced at performing several types of domestic labour at once, and it is clear that her work enables Jay to compose music and talk to other men in peace. Mary's entrance into this scene, and her skilled and silent performance of domestic tasks, represents a short critical interruption in a scene which remains about men and men's work.

The first scene at the model shop, and the first face-to-face encounter between George and Lola, offers a more extensive reflection on women's work. During this scene, which depicts Lola posing for and being photographed by George, Demy uses different framings and perspectives in order to alternate between demystifying perspectives on Lola's work, and more conventional representations of sexual spectacle. The scene also features a number of close-ups of the camera itself, and shots of Lola in the crosshairs of its viewfinder (fig. 2 c-d.) These bear a striking resemblance to shots from the opening scene of Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960): close-ups of Mark's (Carl Boehm) movie camera isolated from the man holding it, and of his first victim framed in the viewfinder (fig. 2 a-b.) These shots in *Model Shop*, through allusion, make an explicit connection between visibility and vulnerability. In *Peeping Tom*, an analogy between photographic representation and gendered violence is literalised, as Mark kills the women he films and photographs. *Model Shop* refers back to this analogy, but itself presents a fairly complex and ambivalent set of images of gendered sexual labour and gendered relations within the context of the model shop.

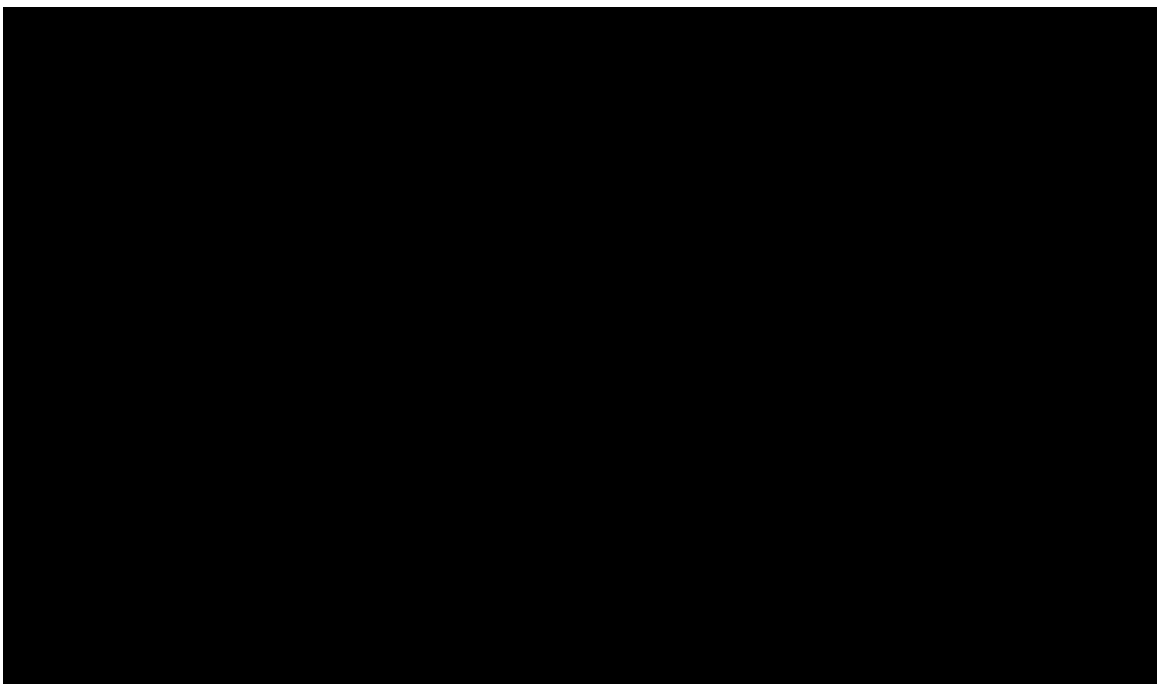


Fig. 2 a-d.

The sequence at the model shop follows a pattern. The long shots show Lola and George distant from one another in the frame, and prominently feature the studio's large, bright lights, which Lola moves around to light herself for the photos, and the hat stand on which she keeps her costumes (fig. 3a). The lights also jut into some of the scene's closer shots. These elements of the frame highlight the industrial and technical conditions of the work Lola is doing. In the moments leading up to the camera's shutter clicking, however, the shots are closer and more conventional, without these contextualising elements. We see more facial close-ups (of both George and Lola) and shots from the camera's perspective, with a close framing of Lola's posed face or body resembling that of the resulting photographs themselves (fig. 3b-c). Repeatedly, at or immediately after the moment of the camera's loud click, Demy cuts to a much wider shot which once again shows the studio's lights and recontextualises Lola's body within her place of work (fig. 3d). There is a pattern of escalation and de-escalation: from long shots which place the two bodies in context, George and Lola are each shot in a manner increasingly typical for their respective genders, until the moment when the shutter clicks, at which point Demy returns to a longer shot which takes in the whole awkward scene including the lights. Lola is also shown changing in and out of the clothes she poses in, thus highlighting again that this, for Lola, is a job.

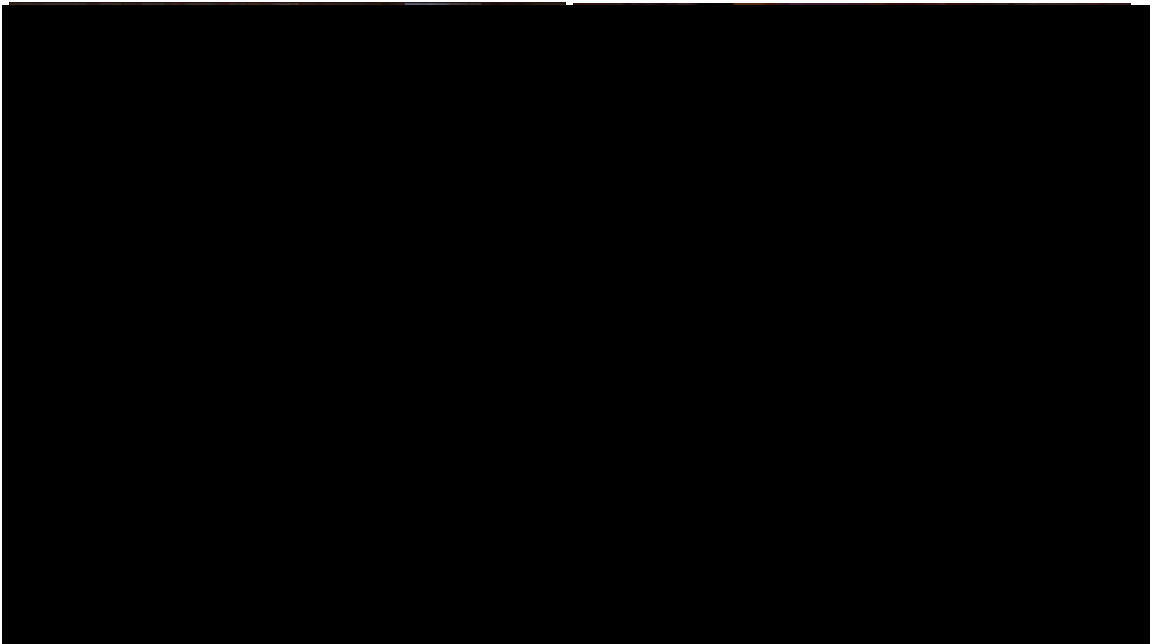


Fig. 3 a-d.

While the film's images self-consciously alternate between conventional and demystifying perspectives on Lola's work in the model shop, the dialogue also presents a demystifying and non-stigmatising approach to this type of highly feminised work. When George berates Lola for doing work he considers degrading, and then reveals that he does not work, Lola responds, 'Then you do not run the risk of degrading yourself by working'. Sex work exists in *Model Shop*, as it does in many other Demy films, as a form of work which is somewhat socially stigmatised, but not inherently tragic. Demy's depiction of Lola's work at the model shop emphasises that sex work has conventions of representation which deprive it of its status as work and positions those who do it as powerless, tragic and/or degraded. Unlike *Lola* or *Une chambre en ville*, which depict major characters selling sex, however, *Model Shop* revolves around George, and includes Lola as a love interest. It is George whom *Model Shop* follows through his day, night and morning. Women working hard in undervalued roles, as mothers, actresses, and dancers, here provide financial and emotional support to the narrative's protagonist, the unfulfilled and alienated New Hollywood man.

The space of the city

Model Shop's realist visual style and sound design complement the neutral or negative affects—detachment, hopelessness, irritation—attributed to George. The film's use of the spaces and sounds of its setting emphasises social fragmentation and vulnerability. In an interview conducted years after *Model Shop* was made, Demy described his ambition when making the film to 'be as realist as possible, to direct a sort of testimonial' (Berthomé 2014, 222.) Unlike for *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*, he did not decorate or stylise his locations: George and Gloria's house, which is full of kitsch trinkets and decorated in bright colours and clashing patterns, was left as its real occupants had decorated and furnished it¹⁹. Waldron notes that the wide shots and eye-level angles which dominate the photography 'place the characters firmly in-situation' and 'underline the connection between [characters'] bodies and their environment, their mood and their habitat' (Waldron 2015, 44.) George expresses love for the city of Los Angeles in dialogue, and yet its sounds, its climate and geography, and aspects of its industry—oil, entertainment—determine the forms of the relationships between the film's characters and are used to highlight the characters' vulnerabilities and the transitory or fragile nature of their bonds. *Model Shop* is preoccupied with visibility and vulnerability, and how individuals and human relationships are formed by the spaces they exist in. Its unusual sound and visual style designate some spaces in the city as highly penetrable, fragile and non-protective, and some as safe and private.

Model Shop features constant diegetic incidental sound, mostly coming from industry or transport. This is a serious departure from Demy's previous films, which had

¹⁹ In an interview in a short documentary, *Chronique cinema*, Demy said that he changed nothing in the house he borrowed to film in: "I kept the ashtrays, the loose change, and I filmed" (Dumoulin 1969).

controlled, non-realist soundtracks due to post-synchronisation or performing to playback²⁰. The diegetic sound is especially noticeable in George and Gloria's home, the setting for three of the film's unhappiest scenes which together tell the story of the acrimonious end of their relationship. In this house diegetic sounds coming from outside the house are loud, constant and aggravating. Sounds occasionally appear to have been added to accompany and comment upon the action, like a musical soundtrack would: in the second domestic scene, for example, two planes pass loudly overhead at climactic moments in a fight between the two characters. A large oil drill stands outside the house, and is a consistent source of repetitive sound. It remains at a constant volume over a cut between the outside of the house and the inside at the end of the opening credits, thus immediately presenting the house as permeable, with its inside barely distinct from its outside. As the camera moves with George to the living room, the drill sound is briefly drowned out by the louder and sharper noise of an airplane passing overhead. Later, after George has left the house in search of \$100, Gloria runs out after him and suggests that they break up, shouting to be heard over the sound of George's car engine. Once he has driven off, the drill sound returns. The sounds emphasise the fragility of the physical structure George and Gloria live in, and function as an aural analogy for the tension and discomfort in their relationship which is otherwise clear from their tetchy, defensive dialogue.

Demy also presents the house as fragile and penetrable visually, and this again is linked to the overbearing presence of the drill. Demy even gives the impression on one occasion that the drill is watching the characters: he cuts from a mid-shot of George staring at the drill to an eyeline match shot showing his perspective on the drill, which is huge and clearly extends beyond the frame (fig. 4a). The next cut is to an odd reverse

²⁰ *La Baie des Anges* is the exception, but it does have a very significant non-diegetic musical soundtrack.

shot showing what is essentially the drill's perspective on George (fig. 4b). A subsequent tracking shot which follows George as he moves through the house, from the outside, again suggests an outside presence watching George, and emphasises the permeability of the structure and the lack of protection it affords George and Gloria from the hot, noisy outside (fig. 4c). George's conversation with the men who come to repossess his car is also filmed to emphasise physical threat: Demy films them frontally, not over George's shoulder, which is jarring and suggests a confrontation, and their large tow truck fills the frame behind them (fig. 4d).

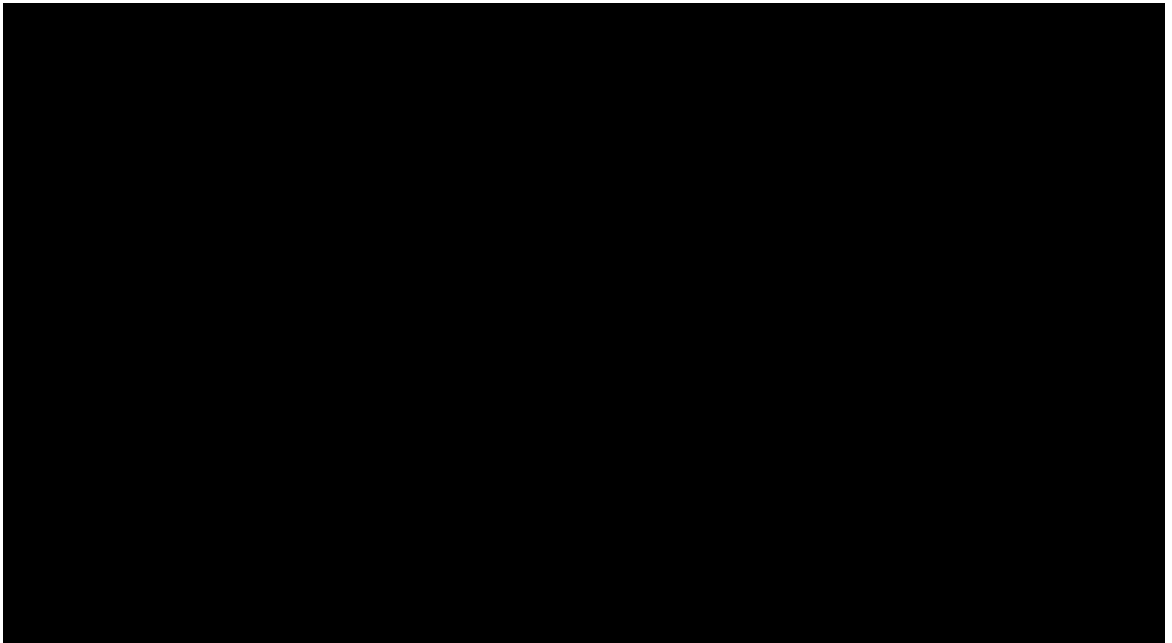


Fig. 4 a-d.

The positioning of the actors and the *mise en scène* in the interior space also reflect on the characters and the problems in their relationship. An early shot shows George getting out of bed and putting on his jeans, hidden by a narrow column which stands between the camera and the bedroom, just wide enough to protect George's body from the gaze of the viewer (fig. 5a). Gloria, meanwhile, spends much of the scene in a highly improbable outfit which seems more fit for modelling in than for wearing at home: just underwear and a patterned and brightly coloured, open silk robe (fig. 5b). One shot also shows Gloria in triplicate: as she discusses with George her desire to have

a baby, the viewer sees her body, her mirror image, and a blonde wig on a purple bust positioned close to her head to act as another image of her (fig. 5c). Gloria, in this scene, is excessively visible and also very expressive in her dialogue: it falls to her to deliver the scene's exposition and explain the history and state of her relationship with George, his financial predicament and why he left his job. George meanwhile, whose body is pointedly hidden, is cagey and secretive, and will remain psychologically inaccessible to the viewer throughout the film.

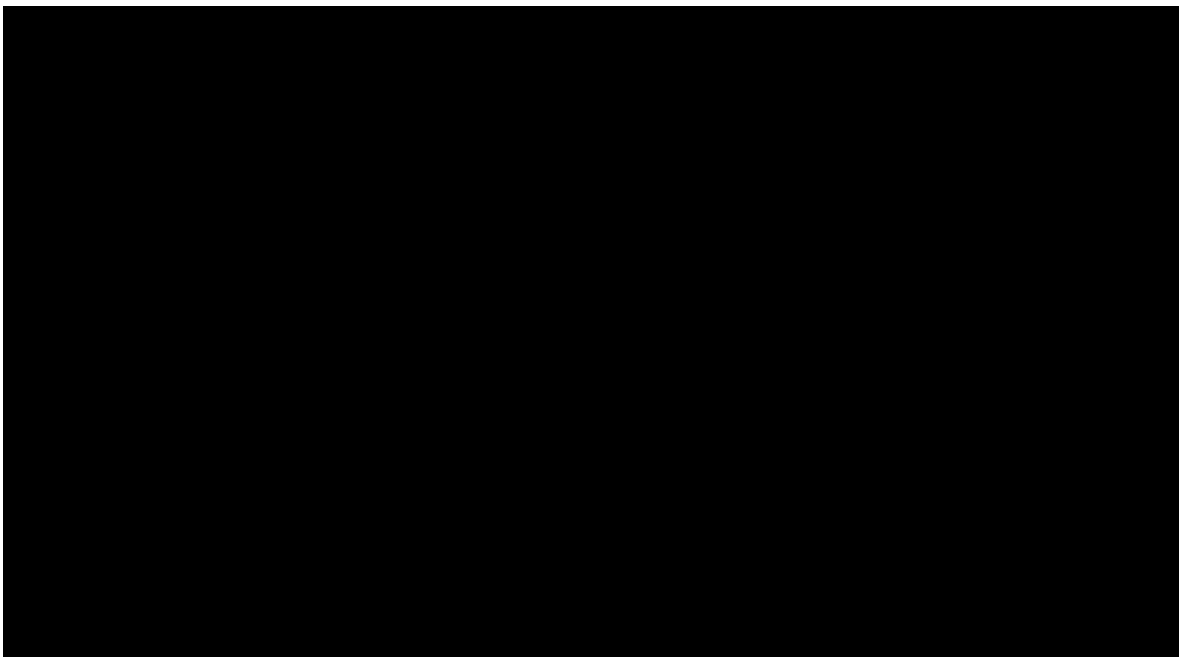


Fig. 5 a-c.

Traffic sounds are audible in every location in the film, including Jay's house, the *Free Press* offices, and the café in which George spends a few minutes. The only locations in the film which appear to offer genuine privacy and protection from inward looks and intrusive sounds are the model shop, and the mansion in Beverly Hills to which George follows Lola. As soon as George enters the model shop the street noise is replaced with non-diegetic music by Spirit on the soundtrack and, at a lower volume, the sound of the television the receptionist is staring at. This total absence of street noise is unique in the film. The shop also resembles a film set—and the set of a Demy film—

more than any other location in the film, with its colourful patterned wallpaper, paint in deliberately clashing colours, and matching props. In order to reach one of the studios, George and the receptionist walk through a dark corridor, in shots edited together with multiple superfluous cuts to give the impression of getting lost. Like the reception, the studio in which George meets Lola is windowless and insulated from street sound. The relationships which exist within it are privatised and transactional, and the shop's clientele are protected. Finally, the mystery occupant of the Beverly Hills mansion, clearly a rich woman, is even more sheltered by her physical environment. When George returns there to look for Lola the mansion appears vast, solid and impenetrable, filling the frame with its curtains closed (fig. 6a). This is in marked contrast to George and Gloria's house which is figured as small and fragile, and often squeezed in the frame by the oil drill (fig. 6b). The woman inside the mansion is barely glimpsed and never identified. Where Demy refers back to *Sunset Boulevard*'s Norma Desmond, and thus to a cinematic era when studio shooting was the norm, the realist conventions of his low-budget, location-shot film are replaced with a sturdy, quiet and controlled environment.

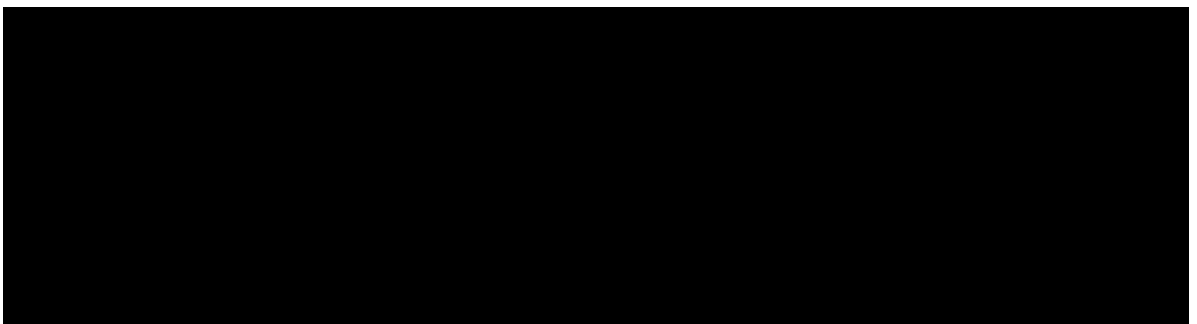


Fig. 6 a-b.

Model Shop uses cinematic space, and certain techniques of realism, to present fragile subjects in relationships which are mostly detrimentally mediated by their physical surroundings. In this respect it could not be more different from *Parking*, which has very few exterior scenes and whose action therefore appears fairly incidental

to the city in which it is set. *Parking* is also a fantasy film, in several senses: its narrative includes various impossible things—cars driving through solid walls, people dying and coming back to life—and it presents a very hard-to-believe image of popular success, whose detachment from reality inadvertently reflects upon the fact that Demy himself had not known such success for some years.

Parking

The production of *Parking* was mired by constraints and compromises, as is the case with a great number of Demy's films after 1970. Berthomé's account of how *Parking* came to be made focuses on the trouble Demy had casting the film, and the lack of interested funders and producers (Berthomé 2015, 362-373). *Parking* is the only Demy film to have been denied an *avance sur recettes*, a film funding scheme administered by the state (Pascal 1985). He ended up receiving funding from several Japanese companies, including a record company (King Record Company) and a publishing house (Kodanasha Publishing), on the condition that he cast a Japanese actor as Eurydice. He cast Keiko Ito, a theatre actor who did not speak French and learned her lines phonetically. The process of filming was extremely rushed, apparently so that it could be submitted to the 1985 Cannes Film Festival: shooting started on February 4th 1985, and the film was released on May 29th 1985. It was not accepted to the festival. Demy later talked about *Parking* as if it were not a finished work, and in a 1988 interview, he said he wished he hadn't made the film and denied responsibility for it, saying, 'It's a film which did not belong to me' (Clech, Strauss and Toubiana 1988, 61.)

Parking is the most complete critical failure of Demy's career. Reviews of the film in cinema journals were all very negative, with most critics comparing *Parking*

unfavourably to Demy's previous film, *Une chambre en ville*. Many reviews, in journals and in the popular press, referred to the film's embattled production. Many also referred to the fact that the film was not chosen to be shown at Cannes, a fact that seems to have greatly disappointed Demy. He blamed his young producer Dominique Vignet for the film not being selected, claiming that Vignet accidentally submitted an unfinished draft of the film to the selection committee²¹. Michel Pascal suggested instead that the committee were punishing Demy for the public defences of *Une chambre en ville* by critics in 1982, by rejecting his next film (Pascal 1985). A third possibility, not put forward by any review or article which broaches the subject, is that the film was rejected because the selection committee didn't like it.

While highbrow critics were uniformly horrified by *Parking*, there were a number of positive reviews in the popular press. Almost all reviews, however, savaged Francis Huster's performance as Orphée, with many describing it as the film's biggest or only problem. It is baffling that Demy agreed to let Huster sing his own vocal parts in *Parking* after insisting that Catherine Deneuve and Gérard Depardieu could not sing theirs when they were to star in *Une chambre en ville*, resulting in a falling out between Demy and Deneuve which was never resolved (Deneuve & Toubiana 2013, 181.) The critic in *Télérama*, who was otherwise impressed with the film, wrote that Huster 'makes such touching efforts to sing in tune' (Murat 1985.) Huster's performance is one of *Parking*'s greatest aesthetic failings, and also a narrative problem: the film over-emphasises Orphée's success in its dialogue and images, but such success is highly improbable for the character as he is performed by Huster. I will discuss Demy's failure to coherently represent success below.

²¹ *Le Monde*, 26/27th May 1985, no author.

James MacDowell and James Zborowski, discussing the aesthetics of films described as ‘so bad it’s good’, argue that films can be judged to be bad, independently of questions of taste and class, if they fail ‘to successfully inhabit the categories they intend to’ (MacDowell and Zborowski 2014, 9.) This can certainly be said of *Parking*, particularly if one considers Huster’s terrible vocal performance and lack of charisma. *Parking*, however, has not acquired the cult audience that seems to be one of the important qualities of ‘so bad it’s good’ films, as MacDowell and Zborowski discuss them. While Orphée’s lack of talent challenges the musical’s central narrative fact—that its star is talented and adored—*Parking* it is not quite ‘so bad it’s good’. It is also not the kind of counter-cinema Jeffrey Sconce describes in ‘Trashing the Academy’ (1995): it is not far removed enough from dominant film culture, nor pleasurable enough to watch, nor perhaps bad enough, to be either of these things. A brief consideration of *Parking* in Olivier Père’s *Jacques Demy* touches on this exact question of badness and pleasure:

It is hard to feel guilty pleasure when watching *Parking*, to enjoy its faults. On the contrary, it is a sad experience. That does not prevent us from looking beyond the finished film’s strangeness, and appreciating the high stakes and the failed audacity of this minor film (Père 2010, 255).

The film’s most impassioned defence came from Gérard Lefort in *Libération*, who referred to rumours that the film is bad and urged the reader to disregard them and see *Parking* anyway. Lefort acknowledged that the music sounds fit for a teenager’s birthday party, and that Huster makes an unconvincing rock star. What thrilled Lefort is that *Parking* ‘militates openly for a paranormal sexuality: an ecstatic sexuality, populated by hordes of dykey amazons and pretty fags’ (Lefort 1985.) In this review, Lefort celebrated something about *Parking* that no other reviewer does.

Demy's previous films had, as I have argued, been haunted by figures representing sexual minorities: this is most literally true in *Une chambre en ville*, whose original script specified that Margaux Langlois's dead son, whose room she keeps as he left it, was gay and died by suicide (Waldron 2015, 140.) *Parking* brings these longstanding concerns of Demy's into the light with a cast of explicitly gay and bisexual characters. Orphée loves Eurydice, and also loves his sound engineer Calais (Laurent Malet), who loves him, and the two are shown kissing and talking about their feelings for one another. Meanwhile Orphée's fan club is entirely composed of women coded visually as lesbians and their leader, Dominique Daniel (Éva Darlan), who ultimately shoots Orphée, alludes to a previous sexual relationship with Eurydice. The casting of Jean Marais as Hadès, and the film's dedication to Jean Cocteau and intertextual relationship with Cocteau's *Orphée* (1950), also appeal to the viewer's knowledge of the very public romantic relationship between these two icons of French gay film²². Laurent Malet also had a notable queer role in his past: he played a beautiful, lovesick gay man competing for another man's affections, like Calais, in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's last film *Querelle* (1982). *Querelle* was based on the Jean Genet novel *Querelle de Brest* (1947), which was published with famous illustrations by Cocteau.

Parking thus has multiple links to French gay men's culture, which remain largely unexplored by Demy scholars. Other Demy films, such as *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*, have been analysed in various texts for their submerged gay narratives, camp aesthetics and influence on recent films by French gay male directors (Colomb 1998, Brassart 2007, Rees Roberts 2008.) *Parking*, an explicit representation of queer relationships which links itself to other queer French

²² Cocteau and Marais were a celebrity couple in the 1940s, and their social life was widely and favourably reported on in newspapers and magazines, according to James Williams (Williams 2008, 170.)

films through citation, is passed over in these texts. *Parking*, a box-office flop in an unpopular genre whose queer narrative was erased by the straight press, is nonetheless a piece of French queer cinema which reflects, as I will argue, on the possibility of bisexual cinema, on the AIDS crisis, and on Demy's own failure.

Parking as bisexual cinema

Generations of critics have dedicated themselves to describing what is gay, in terms of aesthetics, tone, and narrative, about gay film. By contrast, there is so little scholarship on bisexual cinema that it is hard to state with confidence what it consists of. The lack of consideration of what bisexual cinema might look like reflects on a broader perception of bisexuality as a less stable, and more temporary, identity than either homosexuality or heterosexuality, categories into which bisexual people tend to be folded. Even films with bisexual characters such as Cyril Collard's *Les Nuits fauves/Savage Nights* (1992), which I will discuss below, have tended to be studied under the rubric of gay cinema, as books such as Alain Brassart's *L'Homosexualité dans le cinéma français* have tended to use 'homosexuality' as a catch-all term. *Parking* can function as a case study in what might be said to be specifically bisexual about bisexual cinema: as well as depicting bisexual people, it uses music and visual style, in its own clumsy fashion, to express the desire and depict the relationships of bisexual people.

Parking is dedicated to Jean Cocteau, and Cocteau's *Orphée* (1950) is its most obvious intertext. Demy declined an offer from a producer at Gaumont to remake *Orphée* in 1981, and *Parking* draws instead on the original myth, and on the legends of rock stars such as John Lennon (Berthomé 2014, 362-363). The two films, however,

have many evident similarities: a setting in contemporary Paris, characters based on the same mythical figures (Orphée and Eurydice), similar iconography (cars and motorcycles), and a narrative about eternal romantic love between a man and a woman, which loses its meaning somewhat among queer aesthetic or narrative threads. Richard Dyer analyses *Orphée*'s gay aesthetics and discusses the film's use of mirrors and mirror images, their association with narcissism, and the association of narcissism with homosexuality. Dyer explains this association thus:

Gay men fancy people like themselves (men) rather than unlike (women), therefore their sexuality must be an extension of their love of themselves. Or – women are naturally more narcissistic than men, and gay men are more feminine than straight men, therefore gay men are narcissistic (Dyer 2003, 79).

What certain critics have identified as the gay aesthetics of *Orphée* are rooted partly in its images of sameness. Their analysis primarily concerns the film's use of mirrors as the portals to the underworld, and the striking images of Jean Marais's face pressed up to his reflection (fig. 7a). The film's privileging of sameness is reflected equally in the identically leather-clad motorcycle riders who accompany Death (Maria Casares) (fig. 7b), and potentially in the casting in major roles of two of Cocteau's partners: Marais, a former partner, and Édouard Dermit (Cégeste), his current partner. The representation of the romantic relationship between Orphée and Eurydice in this film is deeply insincere: their eventual reconciliation is almost sarcastic in tone, a 'simulacrum of conjugal bourgeois happiness' that does nothing to cover up the fact that Orphée never appeared to care much for Eurydice in the first place (Dyer 2003, 77.)

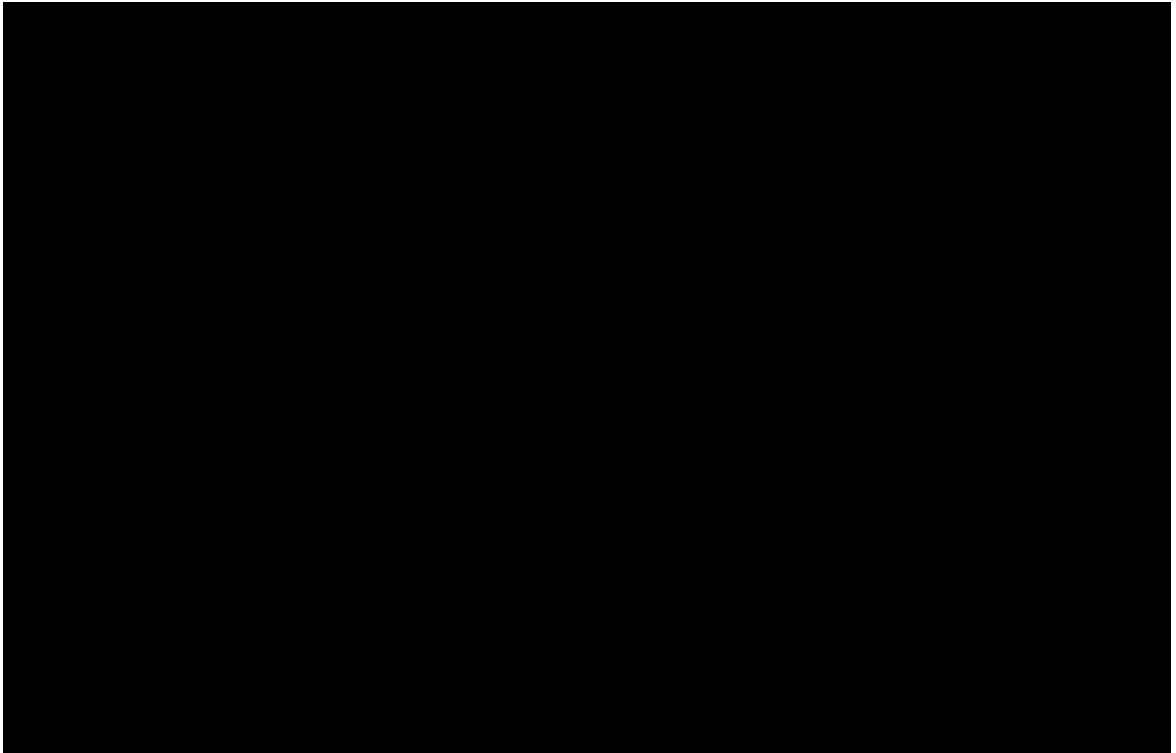


Fig. 7 a-d.

Returning to the original myth, Demy found and decided to incorporate into *Parking* textual evidence of Orphée's bisexuality (Berthomé 2014, 365)²³. In *Parking*'s images, Demy's Orphée is not visually doubled or in relations of sameness. Instead, he is represented through images of difference, multiplicity and abundance. In this way, *Parking* visually represents queer structures of kinship: interpersonal systems of care and desire between people not connected by marriage or blood. *Parking* has this in common with several other Demy films which feature non-traditional kinship structures including single parent and non-biological families, and undermine heterosexual filiation as the primary or only basis on which to name a group of people a 'family'.

²³ An abandoned film project from 1984, entitled *Les Noces (Marriage)*, was also written with a bisexual protagonist, although Mag Bodard agreed to produce the film only on the condition that this element of the scenario be changed (Berthomé 2014, 383).

Demy's placement of bodies on screen in *Parking* emphasises that Orphée loves, and is loved by, large numbers of people. He is often framed in the centre of a large crowd of fans, who have an implausible amount of physical access to him: they run onstage during concerts, attend parties he throws, and in one of the film's last scenes lift him up onto their shoulders to carry him out of the stadium (fig. 7c). He returns their loving gaze: the direction of the number 'Célébration' emphasises reciprocated love between the performer and his fans, with mid-shots of Orphée gazing warmly at a group of fans at his after-show party matched with wider shots of large numbers of fans gazing back at him (fig. 7d). This is part of the film's fantasy of wild popular success, which I will discuss further below, but also represents an expansive, imaginative visual figuring of love, very different to the dyadic structures of sameness which run through *Orphée*.

In terms of romantic love, furthermore, Orphée's bisexuality is reflected in the film's use of music. The song 'Entre vous deux' paints a wholesome picture of bisexuality as having to do with loving two people equally. The lyrics describe Eurydice and Calais figuratively, for example as 'my sun and my moon', and conclude that Orphée should not have to choose between them. These metaphors often use nouns with masculine and feminine endings, so that his love of one man and one woman is reflected in the song not only in the meaning but on a grammatical level. Orphée sings the song with a warm smile as Demy cuts between him and Calais, who is recording the sound, thus implying shared authorship of the song. Previous Demy films like *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Une chambre en ville* have only one love theme, which plays at moments of romantic sentiment or heartbreak. In *Parking*, one love theme ('Entre vous deux') is used in moments of intimacy between Orphée and Calais, and one a different one ('Simplement') in similar moments between Orphée and Eurydice. Thus,

both the diegetic songs and the incidental music in *Parking* signify and reflect the multiplicity of desire and relationships depicted in the film.

Orphée's home life is almost comically idyllic, and the direction of early domestic scenes reflects an overabundance of loving sentiment. These domestic scenes place Orphée within a shifting network of close relationships of different types. The house is run by Clément and Lucienne, an older couple who are shown in the film doing various domestic tasks and who treat Orphée with the indulgence of parents. When Orphée arrives home after his first rehearsal, the light is warm and gentle string music plays as he greets Clément, who is putting logs on the fire. Later, in the kitchen, Lucienne feeds Orphée a taste of the meal she is cooking from a wooden spoon while Eurydice chastens him, 'You greedy thing'. The scenes set at Orphée's home depict a strange but idealised mix of overlapping family, friendship and sexual bonds. Orphée is parented by Eurydice, Clément and Lucienne, and Clément and Lucienne keep Orphée, Eurydice, Calais and Aristée warm and fed, like parents; Orphée has romantic and sexual relationships with Eurydice and Calais, and is friends with Calais and Aristée; and Aristée, Calais, Eurydice and Clément all participate in his professional life. These six people can be seen to mimic different relational structures at different moments: a performer and his entourage; a family with two parents and four children; or a shared living space with fluid romantic and sexual allegiances.

These domestic scenes featuring these four characters use space and mise-en-scène, as well as dialogue, in order to convey shifting information about these characters' relationships to one another. In one scene, in which Orphée, Eurydice, Calais and Aristée are sitting on two sofas, Demy uses the musical theme 'Entre vous deux', which has not yet been sung, but which concerns romantic love outside of traditional coupledness. The dialogue in this scene concerns happiness and love, in

specifically plural terms: Calais says, ‘We all love [Ophée]’; Aristée says Orphée is happy because he is ‘loved and in lov’”; and Orphée proposes a toast, ‘*A nos amours*’ (‘To our loves’). This sequence features multiple intimate two-shots of Orphée and Eurydice (fig. 8a); as the four get up to go to dinner, however, a long shot with deep focus shows Orphée and Calais crouched, talking, in the foreground while Eurydice hovers in the background (fig. 8b). This establishes her visually as the third figure in the implied relationship between Orphée and Calais. Filming the four characters at the dinner table, Demy opposes shots which show Eurydice in isolation with shots which include Orphée, Calais and Aristée, who all know information about the day’s rehearsal that Orphée is trying to keep from his wife (fig. 8c-d). The presentation of Orphée’s home life suggests fluid, changing allegiances between people, a number of different kinds of affective attachments, in an atmosphere which is generally warm and calm.

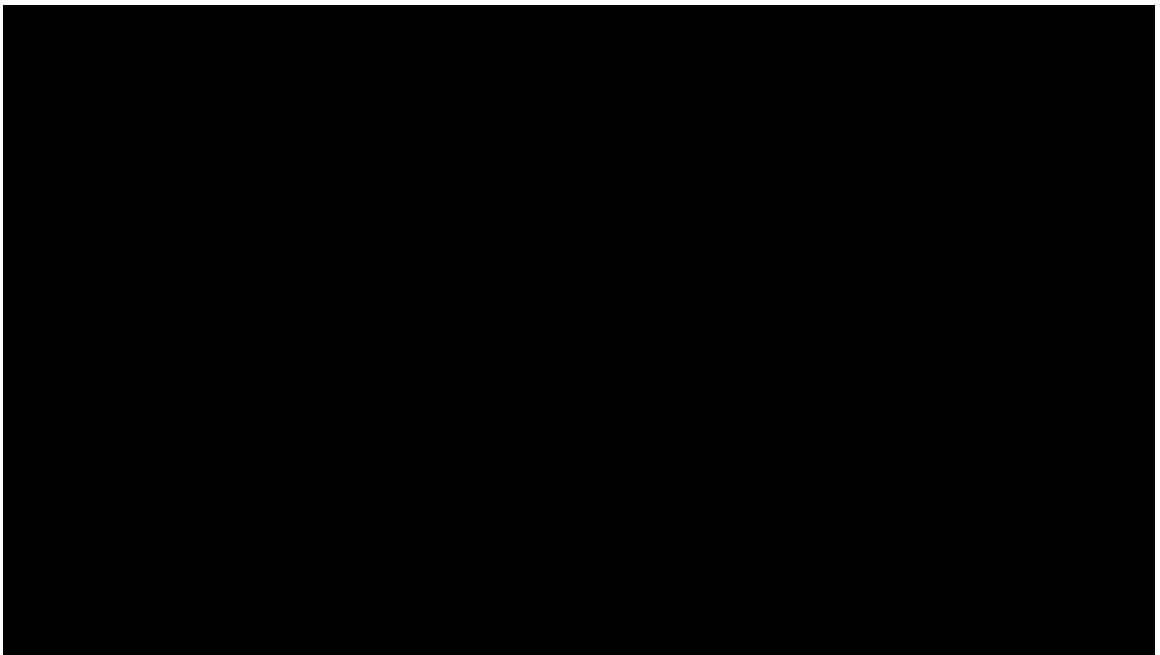


Fig. 8 a-d.

Tonal interruptions to this idyll come in the form of a telephone message and call from Claude Perséphone, whom Orphée met in the underworld. Subsequently, coming seconds after Calais and Orphée kiss, Eurydice’s overdose marks the end the happy queerness implied by Orphée’s domestic situation. This is where the narrative

concerning Orphée's descent into the underworld to rescue her begins, and where his romantic relationship with Calaïs implicitly ends. It could be argued that this makes Orphée and Calaïs's kiss the film's disaster, which precedes or somehow precipitates a sequence of accidents and deaths, in line with the film's subtextual engagement with AIDS.

This turn in the plot is also an acknowledgement that the heterosexual narrative of the Orpheus myth, the drama of a man trying and failing to rescue his wife from the underworld, is the well-known part of this particular story. The film's press coverage mirrors the film's turn towards a well-worn narrative about a man and a woman. On its release, most reviews of *Parking* in the popular and highbrow press entirely elide the film's queer relationships from its narrative, and only describe the relationship between Orphée and Eurydice. This is despite the fact that Demy, Huster and Malet spoke openly in interviews about the romantic relationship between Orphée and Calaïs, and Orphée's bisexuality. It is also despite the film's polemical insistence on Orphée's bisexuality. At least ten newspaper reviews featured plot synopses which do not even mention Calaïs, even though the role is substantial and Malet is listed second in the film's credits. Many other reviews simply describe him as Orphée's sound engineer, or friend, or both; others are circumspect about the relationship, for instance describing it as ambiguous when it is clearly not²⁴. The straightening of *Parking* in the press facilitated its disappearance from canons of French queer film, and illustrates that queer film history is broader and messier than is currently acknowledged.

²⁴ For example, in *Télérama* Pierre Murat wrote, "we like the ambiguity of the feelings between Orphée and his friend Calaïs" (Murat 1985).

Parking as AIDS cinema

Guillaume Boulangé, in an essay printed in the catalogue of the 2013 exhibition on Demy at the Cinémathèque française, tells a different story of the origins of *Parking* than Demy's other biographers and critics. He writes, in somewhat oblique terms, that *Parking* is a combination of two projects: *Monsieur Orphée*, an update of the Orpheus myth in which Orpheus is a celebrated rock star; and *Rendez-vous au parking*, whose "more sexual" narrative concerned an underground car park which was a site for "clandestine meetings" (Boulangé 2013, 32). Darren Waldron extrapolates from Boulangé's statement that Demy had at some point intended for *Parking* to depict cruising (Waldron 2015, 140.)

Boulangé cites no source for his information, which is neither contradicted nor corroborated in any other text. Nonetheless, it makes sense to think of *Parking* in the light of this information about its origins. Of all Demy's films it is by far the most engaged, in terms of its narrative, with same-sex desire and relationships, and it is one of only two films by Demy to contain sex scenes²⁵. The film was also made in 1985, in the early years of the AIDS crisis, and I will argue that the film is marked by the crisis and uses some of the codes of representation that would come to be commonplace in culture about AIDS. It does this of course without ever referring directly to the epidemic: *Parking* is set in fantasy spaces—chiefly Orphée's idyllic country home which he shares with people who love him, Bercy stadium where he is worshipped by fans, and of course the underworld—and expresses little overt concern for contemporary politics or social issues.

²⁵ The other is *Une chambre en ville*, although both these films arguably stretch the boundaries of what counts as a sex scene, since these scenes all depict nothing more explicit than people partially nude and kissing.

The release of *Parking* coincides with a massive rise in public consciousness about HIV/AIDS in French society. Due in part to what initially appeared to be a very low number of cases of AIDS—just over 100 by the end of 1983—there was very little public discussion about AIDS in France in the early years of the crisis, and the government did little to address the coming epidemic in terms of distributing information or creating health policy (Pinell 2002, 13). There were no government-run public health campaign on HIV/AIDS until 1987, and that campaign targeted heterosexuals (Boulé 2002, 9). Even the gay press greeted news of the epidemic with indifference or even derision, as Greg Woods documents in ‘La fin de l’Arcadie: *Gai pied* and the ‘Cancer gai’” (1998). As a consequence of indifference from the government and a lack of community organisations to fill the gap, there were 500 per cent more AIDS cases in France than in the UK by 1993 (Watney 1993, 24). This is why Simon Watney, citing Hannah Ahrendt, describes the AIDS crisis in France as an “administrative massacre” (Watney 1993, 24).

Parking is one of several French films to engage with AIDS in a period during which, as we have seen, there was little political or cultural acknowledgement of or significant activism around AIDS in France. These films do not tend to be included by academics in the canon of French AIDS films. They arguably include *L’Homme blessé/The Wounded Man* (Patrice Chéreau 1983), co-written by Hervé Guibert, which invests a specific gay sexual subculture with a feeling of extreme physical risk by including scenes of threat and violence in cruising sites. At the time of the film’s release in 1983, the press, including the gay press, was reporting on AIDS as a gay ‘plague’ while attempting to minimise the scale of the crisis (Brassart 2008, 155; Woods 1998). Another film to engage with AIDS obliquely is Leos Carax’s *Mauvais sang/The Night is Young* (1986), whose odd heist narrative concerns the theft from a corporate laboratory

of the retrovirus STBO, which is spread among “lovers who make love without love”. This is plainly intended to be analogous with AIDS, but the virus is only a plot device. *Parking*’s engagement with AIDS is both more oblique and more committed. It makes no references to sexually transmitted retroviruses or epidemics, but it is deeply concerned with death and sex; and its images, music, characterisation and dialogue prefigure and participate in the codes of representation which came to be cemented in later, more explicit representations of the AIDS crisis. It also shares with *Mauvais sang* a similar and significant dominant colour scheme: its hell scenes are in black and white with striking elements of red.

Jean-Pierre Boulé writes that it took some years for AIDS to be seen as a sufficiently ‘literary’ subject for the French literary establishment, and that Hervé Guibert’s work of autofiction *À l’ami qui ne m’a pas sauvé la vie* (1990) and Cyril Collard’s novel (1989) and film (1992) *Les Nuits fauves*, both received as autobiographical, were the first respectable mainstream AIDS texts (Boulé 2002, 5). Previous texts dealing with AIDS were deemed “unliterary” and ignored, a reaction “presumably grounded in a denial of AIDS itself” (4). An analogous process seems to have occurred in the world of cinema. The canonisation of early AIDS films reflects a tendency to privilege realism and a perceived autobiographical basis when apportioning cultural legitimacy. Alain Brassart, and Bruno Roth-Bettoni and Anne Delabre, cite the musical *Encore* (Vecchiali 1987) as the first French film to deal explicitly with AIDS in its narrative; it is however for all of them a minor work, mentioned on the way to discussing films they consider more significant milestones. For Brassart and Roth-Bettoni and Delabre this is a considerably longer discussion of *Les Nuits fauves*²⁶.

²⁶ Simon Watney reads *Les Nuits fauves* as a demonstration of the specificity of the politics of sexual identity in France and the French response to the AIDS crisis, arguing that it ‘illustrates with some insight

This is justifiable—*Encore* made little impact on its release, while *Les Nuits fauves* won four César awards and was an enormous commercial success. These texts, however, link its cultural impact with its perceived autobiographical quality. Brassart describes *Les Nuits fauves* uncritically as an ‘autobiographical story’, and opens his account of the film with the fact that Collard was himself ‘contaminated by the AIDS virus’ and died shortly after the film was made, as if to authenticate its portrayal of a person with AIDS (Brassart 2007, 158)²⁷. Guibert’s documentary *La pudeur ou l’impudeur* (1992), an unflinchingly detailed yet ambiguously fictionalised document of his own physical decline, was broadcast on TF1 after his death and has attracted quite a volume of academic writing. *Parking* was released during a period when AIDS was not seen as a legitimate topic for mainstream film. It is also a rock musical, and a fantasy film, whose engagement with the imagery of AIDS is obvious but subtextual. These factors together seem to have assured its exclusion from the canon of French AIDS cinema.

Boulangé’s information about the origins of *Parking* invites us to be attentive to its use of imagery which recalls cruising, which it has in common with numerous other films concerning AIDS. From the early years of the crisis to the present day, films dealing with AIDS, including those authored by people in affected communities, were likely to represent the sites of sexual encounters between men with fearful images of dark urban and/or industrial spaces, in such a way as to further stigmatise what was already a highly stigmatised sexual culture. As already argued, *L’Homme blessé*, which

the psychological workings of a culture which is so profoundly homophobic that the very idea of a *collective* social or cultural response to AIDS on the part of homosexuals is unthinkable’ (Watney 1993, 24-25).

²⁷ Brassart tends generally to describe films as realistic or autobiographical as a mark of their quality or significance: for example, he describes *Les Roseaux sauvages* (1994) admiringly as André Téchiné’s “coming out” (Brassart 2007, 171).

includes several scenes in large, empty, dark urban spaces, filmed in wide shots to emphasise their size, persistently links cruising with a risk of physical violence (fig. 9 a-b). This early representation of cruising suggests that, even when AIDS may have seemed to be a marginal concern, there existed an imagined link between cruising and physical risk which would be taken up in later, explicit representations of AIDS; and that large urban spaces and/or underground spaces were the imagined sites of this risk. *Les Nuits fauves* is one such explicit representation. It features two scenes set under a huge motorway overpass where the protagonist, Jean, goes for casual sex. The sideways tracking shot that follows Jean through the space emphasises its rigid geometry and depth, and the obscurity of the bodies and faces on screen emphasises anonymity and suggests a concomitant danger (fig. 9 c-d).

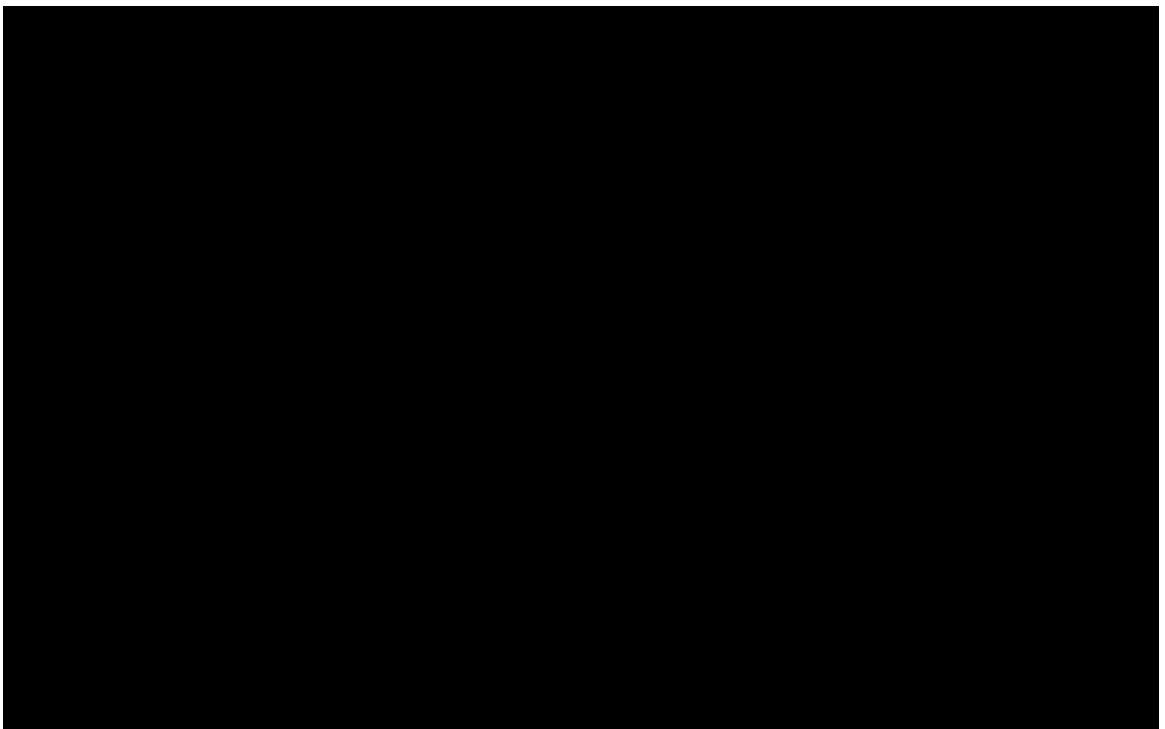


Fig. 9 a-d.

There are two scenes in *Parking* set in the underground car park for which it is named, which contains numerous similar long shots in deep focus of dark, empty, geometrically ordered space (fig. 10a). The liminal space between the car park and

hell's administrative area is similarly vast, empty and dark, as is emphasised by a graphic match (fig. 10b). A wide shot of the empty car park, predominantly black and light green with a sign on the rising barrier as a small note of red, is followed by a similarly wide shot of Caron's (Hugues Quester) car driving through a vast, deserted underground space, with the image again dominated by black, green and the car's headlights as an element of red. Hell itself, where Eurydice is sent after being triaged by an official with a computer, is also dark, with notes of green and red. Its design clearly evokes and connects urban bleakness, illness and casual sex (fig. 10c). It is a high-ceilinged space reminiscent of a disused warehouse, in which stand a pharmacy, an apparently abandoned cinema, and a motel, where Orphée and Eurydice later have sex. This brief shot depicting hell initially shows Eurydice descending the stairs and walking into the space, but the camera tracks backwards quickly to lose her in the crowd of aimlessly wandering people with no connection to one another.

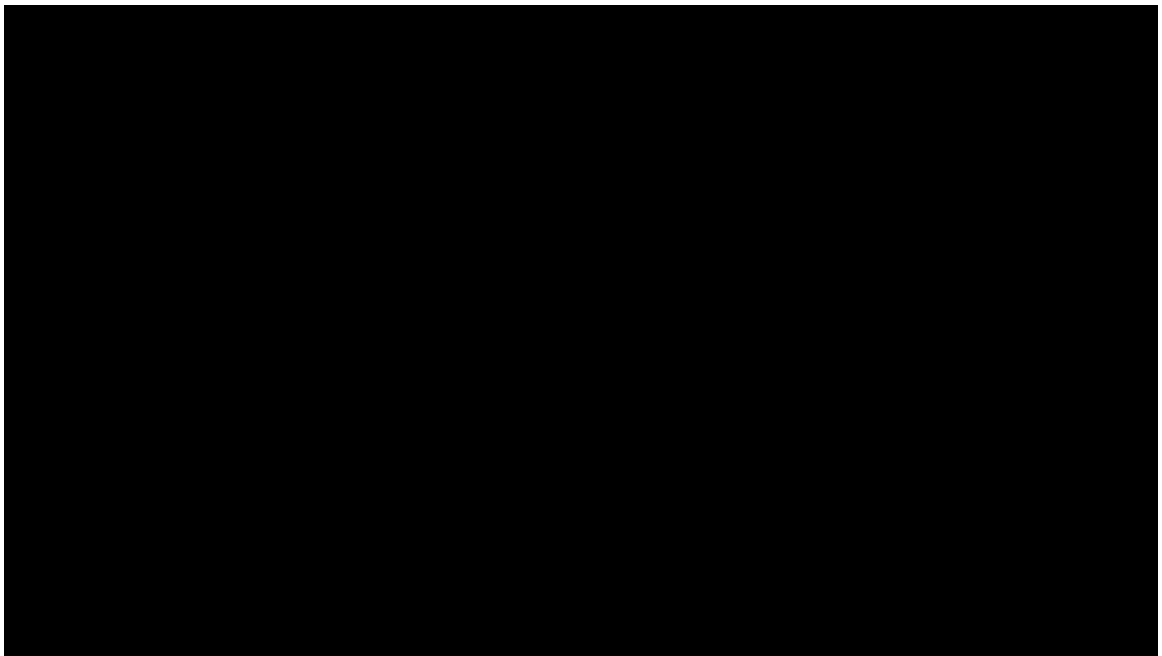


Fig. 10 a-c.

Several of Demy's films feature figures Waldron describes as 'loiterers': 'queerly marked individuals...seen in the periphery of shots' (Waldron 2015, 139). Caron, who brings Orphée and Eurydice to the underworld, is one such queerly marked,

loitering individual, but a more threatening and more significant presence in *Parking* than the loiterers Waldron lists. In Orphée's rehearsal he lurks at the side of the stage, his body brightly lit to make his skin sickly pale but surrounded in the frame by darkness. After Orphée has sent his band away and thinks he is rehearsing alone, he is electrocuted, and Demy cuts to Caron, who walks forwards out of the darkness to claim Orphée.

As a haunting, sickly-looking and dangerous man, plausibly coded as gay by his wardrobe, we can read Caron as a manifestation of homophobic tropes that pre-date AIDS, but became commonplace in representations of gay communities affected by AIDS. He is solitary—if not alone on screen he is lit differently to the other bodies in the frame—and predatory. He is often lit to have a greenish or purplish tinge to his skin, which connects him visually to the underworld through colour but also makes him look ill. He speaks very little, but he can control people with speech and apparently with his eyes, which flash red thanks to some endearingly sloppy special effects as he tells Orphée to obey him and get in his car.

There has already been a Caron in Demy's cinema: in *La Baie des Anges*, Caron is Jean's friend who drives him to Enghein casino and introduces him to the world of gambling. Gambling is framed in the film, in an allusion to phobic tropes about homosexuality, as a secretive and antisocial practice which tears families apart. Caron also has an analogue in *L'Homme blessé*: Bosmans (Roland Bertin), who meets Jean while loitering in a train station, and later drives him to an isolated area where people are having sex in their cars. The visual and narrative parallels between Bosmans and Caron are so striking as to appear deliberate: the two films feature near-identical shots of these pairs of men, with the older man driving and the younger in the passenger seat,

with the same lighting and colour palette, framing, place in the narrative, and affect (fig. 11 a-b).

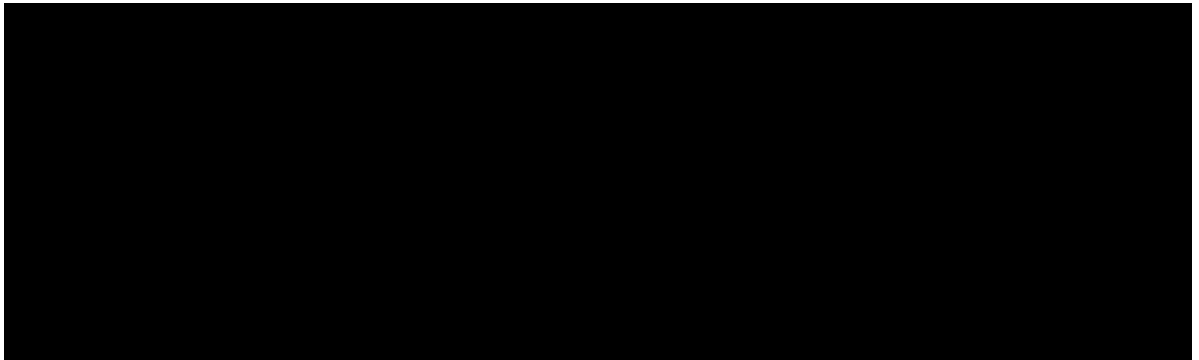


Fig. 11 a-b.

One thing all these figures—the two Carons and Bosmans—have in common is their mobility: in their cars, they drive the younger men into unfamiliar situations (the casino, the woods, the underworld). Gaeton Dugas, the air steward identified (erroneously) in Randy Shilts’s *And the Band Played On* (1987) as the ‘Patient Zero’ of the AIDS crisis, was also figured as frightening because of his mobility: as an air steward, he travelled frequently from city to city, a fact that gave credence to the ahistorical myth that Dugas caused the AIDS epidemic in North America. Dugas, as Shilts paints him, is highly mobile, solitary and amoral, created to be “the very figure of the homosexual as imagined by heterosexuals—sexually voracious, murderously irresponsible” (Crimp 2002, 52). The fact that *Parking* pre-dates most AIDS representation suggests that a character such as Caron—unhealthy, cosmopolitan and mobile, solitary, dangerous—is a variation on an existing set of homophobic stereotypes that were easily adapted to context of the AIDS crisis to frame gay men as dangerous vectors of disease.

In addition to adopting representational tropes which link sex between men with physical danger, *Parking* articulates a connection between sex and death. This connection is not quite causal; rather, their coincidence encourages an affective link

between them. There is a link of this sort between Orphée and Calais only on-screen kiss, at a party after Orphée's concert, and Eurydice's overdose. It has already been implied that Orphée and Calais have a romantic connection, but this surprising kiss is the first and only act of sexual intimacy between them. The continuous movement of the camera from framing Orphée standing on a table, through the crowd over to Calais and into the kiss, sweeps the viewer along and gives an impression of spontaneity. The kiss itself, in contrast with the formally distant opening sex scene with Orphée and Eurydice, is centrally and closely framed in a shot crowded with bright, warm colours and smiling extras. There is an abrupt tonal shift within the same shot, however, as Orphée gets a phone call, Calais goes to take it, and returns with the news that Eurydice is dead. This surprisingly rapid sequence of events within the same shot—the kiss, its interruption, and news of Eurydice's death—allows the viewer to consider these events related, and thus implies a connection between their romantic life and her sudden death.

Demy creates a clearer link between sex and death in the film's second sex scene. Orphée and Eurydice stopping on their way out of hell to have sex at a conveniently situated motel is one of the stranger turns in the plot of *Parking*. As in the myth, if Orphée looks at his wife before they are in the daylight, she will return to the underworld forever. The viewer might assume that this would be the scene in which Eurydice dies: if she does not, it serves no narrative purpose. It does, however, depict sexual activity in an atmosphere of extreme risk. During the scene, Eurydice blindfolds Orphée with the strip of red cloth that served as a tourniquet during her overdose. The musical theme at the start of the scene is not Eurydice's love theme; it is the theme which plays at moments of intrigue and danger throughout the film, for example when Caron is driving Orphée down to the underworld. The music stops as Orphée and Eurydice embrace, and the rest of the shot is eerily silent, which allows the viewer to

clearly hear sounds such as intakes of breath, belt buckles unbuckling and clothes falling to the floor. An alarming red light comes in through the blinds of the motel window and reflects off Eurydice's hair. As in all the hell scenes, Orphée and Eurydice's skin has a sickly greenish tinge. This scene's unnerving silence and unnatural colour scheme strip it absolutely of romance and eroticism, and Eurydice's imminent death imbues it with an uncomfortable feeling of risk. Eurydice does not die in the scene, but in the next, when Orphée takes the blindfold off his eyes and turns to protect her from a swerving car. Her death therefore is not an immediate cause of their sexual activity, but follows it closely.

The association of sex with risk and ultimate death situates *Parking* in its historical context, in an era when certain types of sexual activity were highly stigmatised, and a lack of public health information combined with openly homophobic rhetoric from the media and government fuelled ignorance and contributed to a widespread unwillingness to deal head-on with a worsening crisis (Boulé 2002, 9). *Parking* is, however, an oblique and muddled engagement with the AIDS epidemic: one cannot simply map a narrative about the AIDS crisis onto the narrative of *Parking*. The film's first half, up until Eurydice's overdose, celebrates non-normative desire and relationships and contains scenes of intimacy and affection between men which, as Waldron notes, was bold in the age of AIDS (Waldron 2015, 104). Its sunny presentation of Orphée's bisexuality is even more bold, considering that bisexual men were particularly vilified at this time for bringing HIV into the 'heterosexual community', an imagined set of people who were not supposed to be vulnerable to HIV (Dollimore 1997, 250). Nonetheless, the narrative of *Parking* does not acknowledge, and has nothing in particular to say about, the AIDS crisis. Demy's engagement is, rather, with the images and narratives circulating around AIDS in the mid-1980s.

Parking attests to the fact that the link between gay film and AIDS cinema, in the 1980s, was porous, and that all kinds of films were apt to reflect explicitly or implicitly on AIDS. *Parking* can thus complement, challenge and expand existing understandings of French AIDS cinema.

A failed representation of success

Parking is a rare Demy film in that it depicts someone who has achieved great professional success, and is living an extraordinary life because of it. While many of Demy's films depict working-class people living ordinary or even difficult lives, the protagonists of *Parking* and Demy's final film, *Trois places pour le 26*, are adored by millions and are shown enjoying a lifestyle only open to the very rich and famous. Demy, who had not known fame and success for more than a decade, however, botches *Parking*'s depiction of success. As most reviews of the film stated, the greatest problem with *Parking*'s narrative about the perils of fame is the lead actor, Francis Huster, who had never sung professionally before. He is the only person to sing in the film, and all the songs are all integrated into the context of a performance, rehearsal or recording session, except for the opening song which Orphée sings to Eurydice at home. For this reason, Waldron describes the film as a backstage musical, although the narrative of 'putting on a show' which is a necessary part of this genre quickly fades from importance as the myth narrative takes over (Waldron 2015, 101, citing Altman 1987, 200).

Backstage musicals, however, tend to hide the labour that goes into putting on a show with "bogus rehearsal scenes" which are in fact polished performances (Feuer 1993, 11). They may celebrate spontaneity, community and amateur performance, but

they are also intended to showcase the kind of performance of which only a professional, with a vast industry behind them, is capable. *Parking*'s scene of Orphée rehearsing 'Le Styx' by contrast is frustratingly and tediously like a rehearsal, with various stops and starts, such that the viewer hears the same parts of the song several times. Demy said that Orphée was based on rock stars like Jim Morrison, Mick Jagger, and David Bowie, to whom he wanted to offer the role; *Parking*, however, does not feel like a rock musical, because most of the musical numbers written for the film by Michel Legrand are pop songs. Furthermore, Orphée's wide smile, strange costumes, clownish stage manner, and repertoire of melodic love songs make him no more transgressive than the average boyband member.

Demy's dialogue tends to overstate Orphée's success, integrating into conversations facts that boast that, for example, Orphée has been invited to play a children's benefit concert—which implies that he is both beloved and magnanimous—or that he could have filled a larger stadium for his concerts if he had wanted to. His own house, especially the recording studio, is full of posters and other images of himself. Posters also feature prominently in the composition of shots as he arrives for the first time at Bercy, and in the shots preceding his final performance, where Aristée is shown putting stickers onto the posters to indicate that the shows have sold out. There is something forced and fantastical about this insistence in the dialogue and images on Orphée's unqualified success with the public. In Cocteau's *Orphée*, Aglaonice (Juliette Gréco) incites a gang of people who hate Orphée to kill him, because she hates him too. In *Parking*, Dominique Daniel, the woman who kills Orphée, is the president of his fan club, and is angry because he failed to reserve concert tickets for fan club members. Even concerning Orphée's murder, the problem, implicitly, is that people love him and

his music too much. The fact that Demy himself had not known popular success since the 1960s appears significant in this awkward representation of success.

The earnestness of the presentation of Orphée's success is undermined, intentionally or otherwise, by Huster's performance and by Demy's direction of the film's concert scenes. Despite featuring multiple shots of a large and delighted audience, these scenes fail to convince the film audience that Orphée is a plausibly successful or even a good performer. Thus, his success appears as a mere fantasy, overstated in the dialogue and narrative and yet impossible to believe in. The first of these concert scenes opens with a very wide shot of the stage taken from the middle of the audience, in which Orphée is small and distant; the next shot is a mid-shot of Orphée singing (fig. 12 a-b). The wider shots show blue stage lighting, and the closer shots show red stage lighting, such that the two do not appear to have been taken at the same concert. As the camera tracks back from the mid-shot, it becomes clear that Huster is not really playing the guitar: his fingers are wriggling around without really touching the strings. As the final song of the concert, a more upbeat number called 'Bonheur de vivre', starts, Demy returns to the very wide shot in which the audience and the stage dwarf Orphée (fig. 12c). This shot lasts for quite some time as on the soundtrack Huster's voice struggles with long notes. A closer shot taken from within the front few rows attempts to convey more excitement, but being closer to Huster merely spotlights his unconvincing performance (fig. 12d). Next comes another wide, still shot taken from the back of the stage, which also lasts what feels like too long, once again evacuates the performance of any energy it had previously. These shots are alternated with shots of Calais and Aristée watching from the side of the stage, and the implausibly delighted audience.

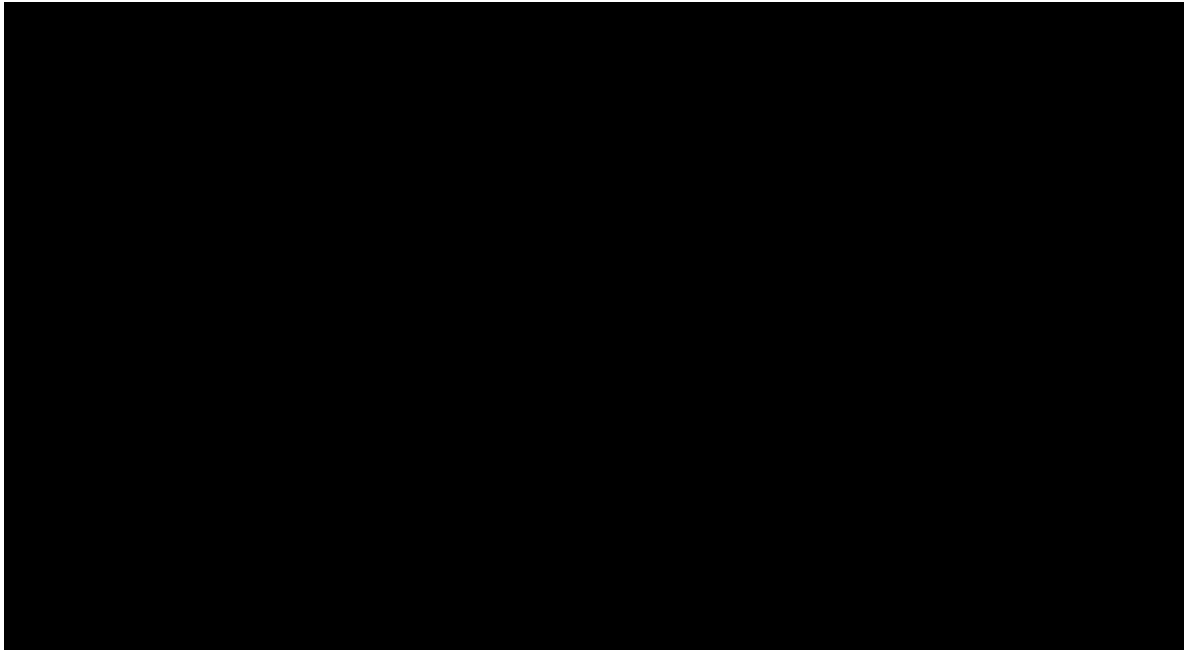


Fig. 12 a-d.

The film's second concert scene, which takes place after Eurydice's (second) death and before Orphée's murder, is curiously similar to the first. It follows the same patterns, in terms of its music as well as shot width and framing. It opens on a wide shot of Orphée performing a ballad ('Eurydice'), taken from the middle of the audience. Orphée then performs 'Bonheur de vivre' again, and the performance is filmed in a combination of excessively wide shots in which he is a small figure, shots taken from the front rows which look up at him, shots of the side of the stage, and shots of the audience. Both performances feature balloons falling from the ceiling and brightly coloured lights, and Orphée wears an identical outfit: a puffy white jumpsuit, and a red headband with flashing red lights. The similarity between these two performances of the same song is like the repetition of the 'Le Styx' in the rehearsal scene. It might resemble real life, in which an artist would rehearse the same song several times, or finish two different shows by singing the same song in the same way; but is an odd choice for a musical film, in which a reprise of a song would ordinarily have significant differences to its first performance. These choices flout generic conventions, and render the performances repetitive.

The review of *Parking* in *Cahiers* by Michel Chion argued that Demy may have been deliberately working against the success narrative, and undermining the plausibility of Orphée as a rock star (Chion 1985, 58-59)²⁸. He cites the outro of 'Entre vous deux' being cut off before its end in the recording studio as an example of Demy preventing the spectator's full engagement with the music. He also makes the assertion that *Parking* is a film about a very successful man, by a man who 'knows the ambiguous situation of enormous isolated success (with certain films) and general lack of success (with the rest of his career until the present).' Hence, Chion argues, the film expresses dissatisfaction with a fickle public. This argument appears strange to me: as I have already noted, Demy consistently emphasises the public's love for Orphée. In fact, part of the discomfort the viewer may feel watching these performances—and perhaps the reason why one reviewer reported the cinema audience laughing at a screening—is that Huster's bad performance appears to be a completely unintentional aesthetic and narrative flaw which works against Demy's desires for the film (Baignières 1985). The effect of this is that *Parking* suggests an ultimately hollow fantasy of success, in which a man enjoys adulation out of all proportion with his talents.

Conclusion

Appearing at the end of a fifteen year period during which Demy had grown increasingly bitter and culturally isolated, *Parking* is a flawed and inconclusive reflection on success and failure. Many of its flaws reflect on the difficulty with which it was made—its rushed and underfunded production, and compromises made during

²⁸ Chion's review generally reads *Parking* against the grain, asserting that Orphée and Eurydice's love is absolutely unbelievable, that Eurydice is "treated like an extra", and that Orphée only loves Calais. While there may be some textual evidence to support this view, it seems odd to deny Orphée's bisexuality when the film argues so polemically for it.

casting—which is itself the result of the failure of Demy’s previous films. It is also very much a film of its time: certain elements of its design, especially the costumes and special effects, have aged badly, and its sexual politics are a strange mix of bisexual utopianism and AIDS-influenced panic. The strangeness and inconsistency of *Parking* means that it has a special role to play in challenging the dominant narratives about Demy’s life and career, of which there are two. The first narrative, at work in Agnès Varda’s documentary *L’Univers de Jacques Demy*, emphasises whimsy in its presentation of Demy’s work, and asserts that is loved above all by women and children. The other, put forward by writing on Demy in gay film studies, suggests that his films are full of secret signs of his sexuality, and for this reason is loved above all by gay men. *Parking* can be used to muddle these two narratives. It is openly and evangelically queer, at times overly insistent about the importance of romantic love, and just as often cynical, morbid and sad. It is not aimed at children, but was found childish by many adults. Its commercial and critical failure is instructive: studies of Demy’s film benefit from acknowledging that he was at all moments of his career a bad fit for French film culture, and that he produced many critically and commercially unsuccessful films and was virtually unable to work for many years because he acquired a reputation as a failed filmmaker.

As I have sought to demonstrate, Demy’s cinema is too queer to be fully incorporated into either the straight or gay canons, and this is what assured his marginal position within French film culture and academic film studies. My next chapter uses the lens of camp to examine two Demy films which queerly inhabit mass culture genres, the musical and the comedy.

Chapter 4: Demy and the politics of camp

This chapter will argue that reading Demy's cinema as camp helps to reveal its critical or political project. Camp is alluded to in coded forms in a lot of academic work on Demy, but many critics are reluctant to name it, or to fully explore the place of camp in his cinema. His work has often been described as 'kitsch', 'nostalgic', 'sentimental', and occasionally as feminine, but these aspects of his cinema, all of which may evoke camp, are often framed as potential defects and have not always been politicised²⁹.

There is not a lot of published documentation of gay fan cultures around Demy's films, but what does exist suggests that some of them have been part of the cultural life of certain communities of gay men in France. Yet, as I detailed in my introduction, official or academic sources of information and reflection on Demy's films do not comment upon these films' continuing life as camp classics or in terms of their significance for gay audiences. Demy's personal love for Hollywood musicals, which began in his childhood, is referred to in biographical material by Taboulay (1996) and Berthomé (2014), and in *L'Univers de Jacques Demy*; all these texts, however, underplay the fact that queer people are historically overrepresented in the production and consumption of these films, and that the association between gay men and musicals is longstanding and widely known (Cohan 2005, 1-2).

The idea of camp as an artistic sensibility and as a viewing practice has been explored and politicised in a considerable volume of writing which focuses on the

²⁹ These and similar adjectives appear in countless reviews of Demy's films around the time of the French New Wave, as discussed in Chapter 1. Contemporary critics such as Anna Marmiesse also argue that Demy's cinema risks being mistaken for kitsch and superficial (Marmiesse 2013, 58-60.)

Hollywood musical as an exemplary camp art form. As Steven Cohan (2005) emphasises, camp is a deliberate and political aesthetic, deployed notably by queer people, especially gay men, who made musicals in studio-era Hollywood in order to address these films to an audience of queer people, especially gay men. This is despite the fact that the dominant narratives of the films themselves invariably consist of the journey of a man and a woman towards everlasting romantic love. Rick Altman argues that Hollywood musicals have heterosexuality built into their very structure, since the films proceed through paired segments depicting the similar antics of a man and a woman whose qualities are opposed, but who will ultimately be standardised and united through romantic love (Altman 1989). These films, however, have two registers and two audiences: a straight audience to whom the language of camp would not necessarily be legible; and an audience of sexual minorities who could read the codes of camp and access a different set of meanings in the film. Reading a film as camp disrupts the sense, constructed in the musical through a repetition of generic plots, that heterosexual partnership is compulsory.

As Richard Dyer has argued, camp art takes a critical stance relative to heterosexual culture, reworking the 'values, images and products' of this culture with 'irony, exaggeration, trivialisation, theatricalisation and an ambivalent making fun of and out of the serious and respectable' (Dyer 1987, 178). Writers on camp have emphasised how this artistic sensibility stems from the experience of being queer in a society which is unwelcoming or threatening to you and encourages you to 'pass' by mimicking straight behaviour in public. The theatricality of camp art, the sense of 'life as theatre', responds to the 'theatricality' of passing, according to Jack Babuscio. It encourages 'a heightened awareness and appreciation for disguise, impersonation, the projection of personality, and the distinctions to be made between instinctive and

theatrical behaviour' (Babuscio 1993, 25). Camp art creates a critical gap between the self and the gendered and sexual roles into which people are assigned, casting them as 'superficial—a matter of style' (24).

This is not to say that camp art is emotionless, superficial or trivial: camp culture often has a particular emotional intensity. Attempting to uncover the appeal of Judy Garland to gay men, Dyer describes a 'combination of strength and suffering, and precisely the one in the face of the other', in her performances (Dyer 1987, 149). This combination of emotional intensity and theatricality is a common register in camp art. The emotion in question is often sadness: Dyer writes of 'the knife edge between camp and hurt, a key register of gay culture', with reference again to Garland's performances (180). Camp's combination of distancing aestheticism and theatricality, and intense sadness is an impressive quality of Demy films such as *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Une chambre en ville*. These films feature non-naturalistic aesthetics and techniques such as sung dialogue, matching décor and costumes, and theatrical, gestural acting. They deal, however, with hard subject matter in an especially uncompromising way, and were said by various critics to make audiences cry, as I will discuss in my next chapter. Dyer's definition of camp suggests that it exists, partly, in this place of overlap between aestheticism and emotion.

The two films studied in this chapter are not sad films, and participate in genres associated with lightness and joy: the musical, and the comedy. Darren Waldron briefly discusses camp in his analysis of *Les Demoiselles*, arguing that '[h]eterosexual enamoration is theatricalised and parodied' in the film, and that it creates a slippage between the subject and their gender (Waldron 2015, 70). This chapter will affirm Waldron's claim by studying the effects of the camp register on Demy's presentation of heterosexuality and gender in *Les Demoiselles* and *L'Événement*, while considering

several broader questions concerning camp in Demy's cinema. How, exactly, does Demy posit that gender and sexuality are assigned roles rather than essential traits? How does Demy respond to other camp art in these films, through citation and through shared aesthetics and narrative concerns? And, what kind of world do these camp films anticipate?

Les Demoiselles de Rochefort

Les Demoiselles de Rochefort is perhaps a perfect case study for the ambivalent or dual position Demy occupies in French popular culture. It seems to be enduringly significant for two different sets of fans or audiences. Two texts attest to its significance for these audiences; each ignores the existence of the other audience. The first text, Varda's 1993 documentary *Les Demoiselles ont eu 25 ans*, documents its life as a straight film in the context of its 25-year anniversary celebrations in the city of Rochefort. In the film, Varda gives an account of how the film has been integrated into the city's institutions: we see footage of streets being named after Demy and Françoise Dorléac, who played Solange in the film and died soon after its release in a car accident. The mayor of Rochefort discusses the film's impact on the city's post-industrial and previously declining economy; and a local school teacher shows a series of primary school children's drawings of twins Delphine (Catherine Deneuve) and Solange. Varda interviews local people who participated in the film, who tell stories about how its filming helped local businesses, or how several heterosexual couples were formed during filming. The same school teacher says that despite the film's worldwide success, 'The film belongs to the people of Rochefort, like a gigantic home movie'. Varda, characteristically, also weaves details about her family life and her process of mourning

Demy into the documentary, with footage of their daughter Rosalie on set, and touching silent images of Demy performing putting on his jumper, which Varda says in voiceover could only have been captured by someone who loved him. Varda's documentary attests to the film's significance for Varda and Demy's own family unit, and for the people of Rochefort.

Les Demoiselles is invested with a very different set of qualities in 'L'Étrange Demy-monde', an essay published in the anthology *Q comme queer* in 1998. Philippe Colomb writes that that Demy's films, particularly *Les Parapluies* and *Les Demoiselles*, are 'a major element of French homosexual culture' (Colomb 1998, 39.). More polemically, he writes that 'these two explicitly heterosexual films only seem to continue to have any real existence in the gay, or at least queer, imagination'. This essay was published around the time of what Nick Rees-Roberts names the 'Demy revival', during which several films were released by gay male directors which bore Demy's influence, including *Jeanne et le garçon formidable* (Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau, 1998) and *17 fois Cécile Cassard* (Christophe Honoré, 2002) (Rees-Roberts 2008, 109.) This affirms Colomb's claim that Demy was an important cultural figure for gay communities in 1998, although it is possible this is no longer the case. Nonetheless, Colomb's affectionate take on *Les Demoiselles* and *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* attests to a considerable gay fan culture surrounding Demy's films, at least in this historical moment, which is absent or excluded from Varda's account of who loves Demy.

Colomb's piece confidently asserts, without ever saying it explicitly, that different people will read films, even down to their basic narratives, in completely different ways depending on aspects of their identity and experience. He speaks occasionally in the second person, relating what 'we'—queer people who love Demy—take to be the meaning of his films. He speaks from a queer collective consciousness,

and his readings of the films' narratives appears to have the full support of an interpretive community. Colomb's confident take on *Les Demoiselles* as a queer narrative affirms what Alexander Doty argues in *Making Things Perfectly Queer*: that a queer interpretation of a piece of mass culture is just as 'real' as a straight interpretation, and that such a reading is not alternative, because mass culture is already queer (Doty 1997, xi-xii).

Clearly, each of these descriptions of Demy's fans corresponds to a real set of people, and, as with other Demy films, *Les Demoiselles* is open to multiple kinds of interpretation. Both the qualities emphasised in the straight reading—nostalgia, joy, detachment from lived reality—and those emphasised in the queer reading—the representation of same-gender couples, gender insubordination in the characters—could be constitutive of camp. Clearly, its narrative can be described in multiple ways, but its basic shape is as follows. It begins on a Friday with the arrival in Rochefort of a group of travelling performers, shows the preparation and execution of a show, and ends with the performers' departure on a Sunday. It follows the movements of a large number of characters over this period, and the film ends with the formation of three heterosexual couples: Solange Garnier and Andy Miller (Gene Kelly), Delphine Garnier and Maxence (Jacques Perrin), and Yvonne Garnier (Danielle Darrieux) and Simon Dame (Michel Piccoli). Colomb's sets of 'homosexualised' couples, whose antics take up more of the film's running time, are: Solange and Delphine, twin sisters who live together, who Colomb likens to a butch-femme couple; Bill (Grover Dale) and Etienne (George Chakiris), two of the performers who come to Rochefort for the festival and leave town together afterwards; and Andy and Simon, who are old friends. There are other characters involved in the film's large network of romantic entanglements including Guillaume (Jacques Riberolles), an unpleasant art gallery owner with whom

Delphine breaks up near the start of the film; and Judith (Pamela Hart) and Esther (Leslie North), two dancers who leave Bill and Etienne for sailors before the fair. Yvonne Garnier, the twins' mother, also has a young son, Boubou (Patrick Jeantet), whose father is not in the film and whose care is shared by a large number of characters. Delphine and Solange share the responsibility of taking the boy to and from school, as their mother can't leave the café she runs, but the two are shown delegating that responsibility without concern to strangers and acquaintances. This is another example of a queer structure of kinship in Demy's cinema: Boubou seems to be being raised collectively by an informal and changing family.

Aestheticism and theatricality

Babuscio writes:

In film, the aesthetic element in camp further implies a movement away from contemporary concerns into realms of exotic or subjective fantasies; the depiction of states of mind that are (in terms of commonly accepted taboos and standards) suspect; an emphasis on sensuous textures, images, and the evocation of mood as stylistic devices—not simply because they are appropriate to the plot, but fascinating in themselves (Babuscio 1993, 22.)

In footage included in a 1966 Belgian television documentary, *Derrière l'écran* (Delvaux and Beukelaers, 1966), Demy, sat next to Michel Legrand at the piano, explained that he did not care about the plot of *Les Demoiselles*, and that his concern was with the 'general feeling' the film would evoke. One can indeed perceive in *Les Demoiselles* a hierarchy in which the sounds and images, and resulting mood, are of greater importance than the narrative. Clearly, Demy and his team went to great lengths

to create a formally unusual and beautiful world in which to film. Bernard Evein arranged for 40,000 square metres of facades in Rochefort to be painted in bright colours, and the team got permission from the mayor of Rochefort to repaint its transporter bridge pink, although unfortunately in the end there was not enough money in the budget to see this through (Berthomé 2014, 196). Great care was also clearly taken to match the colours of costumes to the sets. During a scene depicting a dinner party, Demy also imposes jarring formal constraints on the dialogue: it is delivered in rhyming alexandrine verse, for no reason. The film shows a string of song-and-dance numbers and other set pieces including street scenes with crowds of dancing extras in the background. In the context of so much conspicuous decoration and spectacle, the viewer would likely agree with Demy that the film's general feeling matters more than its story.

On a simple narrative level, *Les Demoiselles* is very concerned with performance. Many of its characters—including Bill, Etienne, Delphine, Solange and Andy—are performers by profession, and many of its numbers are also performances to informal diegetic audiences. Maxence, Yvonne and Bill and Etienne all perform to the people sitting in the café, and Andy performs to Simon. People sitting around in *Les Demoiselles* thus become an additional audience for the characters' singing and dancing, and in numbers such as Maxence's song, this audience is also ready to take up the song and become a chorus. In addition to the formal and informal performances in *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*, the film is also concerned with performance in the other sense: it is full of obvious and cheerful artifice of all kinds, such that its characters appear to be playing their roles, rather than living their lives. All of this artifice—in wardrobe, hair and makeup, sets, acting, and countless other aspects of the film—detaches the action of *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* from lived reality. It creates a film

focused on performance rather than essence, surface rather than depth, and in a narrative ostensibly built around heterosexual romance it also detaches gender and sexuality from the subject.

The film's costumes are not plausible as a person's clothes, and instead announce themselves at all times as costumes: they are, as Nancy Virtue writes, 'oddly costume-like and excessively color-coordinated' (Virtue 2016, 25). This is especially true of the film's 'doubles', who are in matching costumes: Judith and Esther in matching sparkly tops, shiny trousers and neck scarves, Bill and Etienne in matching shirts, ties and trousers, and Delphine and Solange, as well as their mother, in the same cut of dress. Delphine and Solange also wear matching hats and shoes, and obvious wigs, each the same colour as the actress's usual hair: blonde for Deneuve, and auburn for Dorléac. These cartoonishly similar and unnecessary wigs are an extra element of high gendered artifice on the bodies of the Garnier sisters. Their hair, costumes and exaggerated makeup are so unnatural and excessive, and modify their bodies so much, that the pair appear ready to be the inspiration for a drag act.

The actors' performances, too, call attention to themselves as performances. Gene Kelly maintains a toothy grin throughout almost the entire film, regardless of the character's supposed mood, and Deneuve and Dorléac both have exaggerated fussy mannerisms and deliver their dialogue theatrically. It is also clear that neither actor is skilled at their character's supposed skill. Deneuve evidently has no ballet training and dances her steps happily but inelegantly, and Dorléac makes no effort to even pretend to know how to play the instruments Solange picks up.

The project of deconstructing the Hollywood musical could result in something arch and joyless, like Godard's *Une femme est une femme* (1962). Godard's film breaks

elements of the musical down into their constituent parts, for example by separating the musical accompaniment, the vocals, and the dance out into separate parts in a musical number. It is very evident, however, that Demy's project was not to take the pleasure out of the musical. *Les Demoiselles* reproduces, to excess, the pleasurable spectacle and design of the musical, while also foregrounding and exaggerating certain aspects of camp which were already present in films of this genre. The film demonstrates that self-reflexivity is not necessarily anti-conventional: in its attitude towards the Hollywood musical *Les Demoiselles* is simultaneously critical and loving.

Camping the heterosexual couple

In *Les Demoiselles*, through Demy's use of colour, costume and music, heterosexual coupling becomes superficial and entertaining: matter of fitting into pre-established aesthetic patterns, rather than a natural state. The film was criticised by two Americans of note—Pauline Kael and Gene Kelly—for failing to reproduce the conventions of the American musical. Kael's review of the film lamented that it is by 'a gifted Frenchman who adores American musicals misunderstands their conventions' (Kael 1994, 208). Kelly meanwhile criticised the casting of non-professional singers and dancers like Deneuve and Dorléac in lead roles, and suggested that Demy had failed to grasp the skills required by performers in musicals (Gutman 2013, 77). There are certainly significant differences between *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* and American film musicals, particularly concerning the number of heterosexual couples and the displacement of almost all interaction between the couples to the very end of the film. To cast these differences as a failure is perhaps to misunderstand Demy's project. The aestheticism of *Les Demoiselles*, the many ways in which it strives above all to be

beautiful, ordered, and pleasurable, are part of a politicised camp aesthetic which makes visible the mechanisms through which the American musical constructs heterosexuality.

Richard Dyer and Rick Altman offer different models of heterosexual romantic compatibility in the musical. Altman describes at length how sexual difference is inscribed in the narrative structure of the American musical. Rather than following a cause-and-effect principle and relying on the supposed psychological motivation of the main character, the musical has two leads, one man and one woman, and ‘The film progresses through a series of paired segments matching the male and the female leads’ (Altman 1989, 28). The man and the woman incarnate opposite sets of qualities and values—they may be opposed by their age, their social status, their association with high or low culture, among many other things—and the musical is a ‘cultural problem-solving device’, with the marriage of the man and woman also reconciling the two opposing sets of qualities they incarnate (27).

Dyer lists three other models of heterosexual compatibility in his article ‘I Seem to Find the Happiness I Seek’. There is what he calls the ‘Jane Austen model’, in which ‘What makes a heterosexual relationship agreeable is the blending of opposites, the balance of, say, his pride and her prejudice, both sides making up the deficiencies of the other’. This implies that ‘masculinity and femininity are themselves tantalisingly incomplete opposites that can be rapturously fused in an equal, loving relationship’ (Dyer 2012, 89-90). Then there is the ‘Barbara Cartland model’, in which ‘the spice is inequality as well as difference; the intoxications are having power over, surrendering to a greater power, manipulating the powerful to your own ends, ceding power before the charms of the less powerful’ (90). The less common third model of complementarity ‘suggests that qualities of sameness and identity, of finding what you have in common, might also be delightful’. Dyer goes on to argue that inequality between men and

women is constitutive of heterosexuality, and that in the musical, the closer the couple comes to having sex, the more the expression of their relationship through dance will eroticise the man's power over the woman.

While meticulously unpicking the gendered structure of the American musical, Altman uncritically uses the phrase 'opposite sex' several times (19, 32). This serves only to emphasise that, as Dyer has argued, it is part of the overall effect of the construction of heterosexuality that men and women appear to be not only different but opposite, complementary sides of a binary (Dyer 1997, 264-265). Through endless reiterations, the binary logic of heterosexuality becomes an integral and invisible part of the fabric of the American musical, in an always strained and never-quite-adequate effort to naturalise heterosexuality.

Demy removes all the expected grounds for a heterosexual match from *Les Demoiselles*. The matched heterosexual pairs in the film are neither opposites nor especially similar, in terms of their respective ages, occupations, social statuses, temperaments etc. Rather than through complementarity in their character, they are matched together through apparently arbitrary aesthetic signs. The following are examples of these aesthetic signs: when Andy and Solange meet she is wearing lilac and he is wearing white and light pink, and when they find each other again at the end, are both wearing white (fig. 1a); Delphine and Maxence both have light blonde hair (fig. 1 c-d), and Solange and Andy both have dark hair; Yvonne and Simon are both wearing yellow when they are reunited close to the film's end (fig. 1d). All of these couples also sing the same melody when singing about one another, at different times in the narrative, even before they have met.

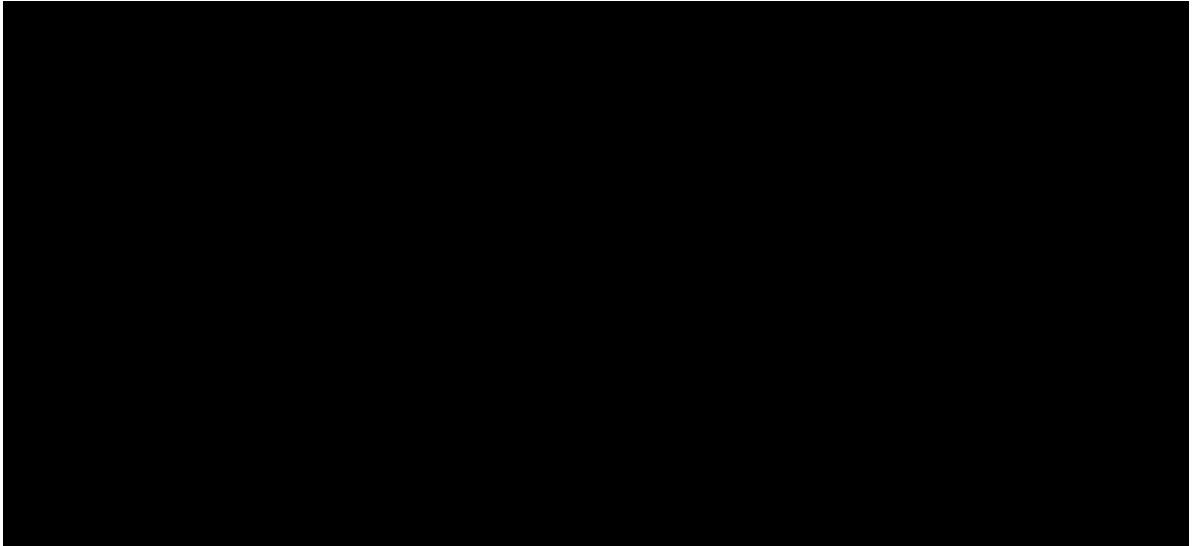


Fig. 1 a-d.

The use of aesthetic elements such as colour and music to match the characters romantically emphasises that each one simply occupies a position in a structure. There is such a number of couples in *Les Demoiselles*, and each character spends so little time on screen interacting with the person they are matched to, that the pairings have no psychological justification or plausibility. Delphine and Maxence do not even meet on screen: Maxence is simply shown getting into the truck carrying Delphine out of town at the end of the film. The heterosexual pairs are not supposed to be together because they like each other, or because the events of the narrative have brought them closer together; they are supposed to be together because one has painted a picture of another before seeing her face, or because they have the same hair, or are both wearing white, or have both made up the same song to sing about one another. This turns heterosexual romance into a superficial game: the pleasure of the film isn't in the eventual union of a man to a woman, it is in the images and sounds—which may be the case in any musical, but it is especially clear in this musical. *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* proposes that heterosexual romance is a function of a structure, and privileges style and surface over character development.

Certain individual scenes are governed by the same logic, with rhythmic editing and a careful choreography of the actors' bodies creating visually pleasing patterns in the frame. Interpersonal relationships, and especially courtship, are depicted in these scenes through these visual rhythms and patterns as much as through dialogue. This again casts heterosexual romance as part of an entertainment. There are two scenes which feature Delphine and Solange and Bill and Etienne together, and these scenes provide an opportunity to display these four bodies in colourful shifting patterns. The actors are depersonalised during these interactions, and become two pairs of similar units. Delphine and Solange become one type of body—similar by their gender, height and matching costumes—and Bill and Etienne become another. This places Bill and Etienne's (in any case half-hearted and insincere) courtship of the twins in the context of a visual structure, and puts gender difference on the same level as the difference between a dress and trousers, or between purple and blue.

After their girlfriends leave them for sailors, Bill and Etienne come to Delphine and Solange's flat to ask them to perform at the fair. The first half of this scene has frosty, oppositional dialogue complemented by static camerawork. Most shots show symmetrical configurations of two or four of the characters, except a quick and rhythmic sequence of mid-shots of each of their faces. Almost every shot is followed by a similarly composed response shot. This part of the scene frames the two pairs as adversaries (fig. 2 a-b).

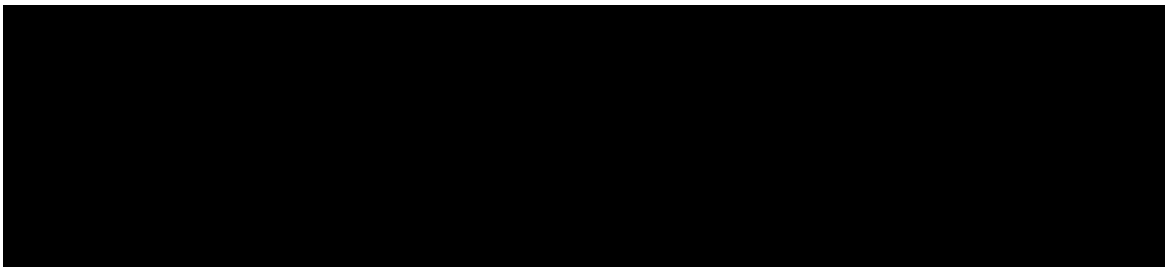


Fig. 2 a-b.

Subsequently there is a break in this visual regime of twos and fours when Solange goes to the piano to play a song for Bill and Etienne. The shots in this sequence are mid-shots of Dorléac's face as she sings, in shallow focus, and long shots which show Solange on the left side of the frame, and the other three characters crowded into the right side. Solange's self-expression creates a disturbance in the pattern, and is filmed as a singular event. The subsequent song-and-dance number returns mostly to the balanced patterns of four, although it is more energetic than the dialogue-based scenes, with longer takes and more camera movement.

The second scene featuring Bill, Etienne, Delphine and Solange takes place in the fair's backstage area after the twins' performance, and shows a return to the oppositional dynamics of their earlier interaction. For most of the shots in this sequence, the positions of the bodies in the frame are completely symmetrical. The early part of the scene shows the four bodies together, in shifting patterns. The second part has the space divided in two by a white curtain, and alternates between shots of Bill and Etienne on one side of the curtain, positioned symmetrically, and the twins on the other side (fig. 3 a-b).

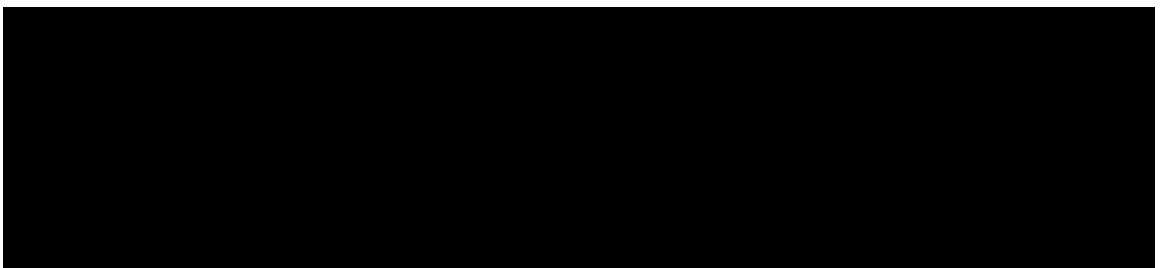


Fig. 3 a-b.

The subsequent musical number, in which Delphine and Solange complain that men never want to commit to them, is filmed in pairs of mirroring shots with mirror image camera work and body movement (fig. 4 a-b).



Fig. 4 a-b.

Once the twins leave and Bill and Etienne go outside, the pattern is broken once again: they sing to each other, and break into a dance full of high leaps and turns as the camera cranes out. The song's lyrics express regret that they are not taken seriously as potential romantic partners by women, but their expansive dance steps and the camera's upward movement connote freedom and happiness. Bill and Etienne have been rejected by women once again, but are apparently very content to still be together.

The relationships between Delphine and Solange, and Bill and Etienne, and Bill and Etienne's attempted courtship of the twins, are depicted in scenes conspicuously organised around visual patterns. This is analogous with the larger structure of the narrative, in which courtships appear to be simply part of a pattern or structure. The union of the three heterosexual couples at the end of the film appears both inevitable and arbitrary. The consignment of the formation of the couples to the film's final minutes further emphasises that heterosexual romance is not the point of this film, and that the viewer's pleasure will come from watching the movements of bodies on screen and of characters in an interpersonal structure. It is perhaps because of its surface-level and trivialised romantic matches that *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* welcomes against-the-grain readings, and easily offers alternative romantic possibilities for its characters, such as those suggested by Colomb.

Stardom and the song-and-dance man

Les Demoiselles uses citation in the construction of Gene Kelly's character, Andy Miller, in order to reflect critically on the heterosexual masculinity Kelly tended to embody in his MGM musicals. The character of Andy Miller, if indeed he can be described as such, is a simple reiteration of aspects of Kelly's existing star persona. The dances Kelly choreographed for the film, and the other thing he does on screen, build up a picture of what Andy is like by citing his roles in MGM musicals like *The Pirate* (Vincente Minnelli, 1948), *On the Town* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1945) and *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951)—these citations are enumerated by Becker and Williams (2008). Accordingly, more than an original character, Andy is a composite of characteristics already associated with Kelly thanks to his roles in other films, and *Les Demoiselles* is in part a testament to Kelly's incomparable status as a star of musicals and a dancer.

According to Steven Cohan, and Becker and Williams, Kelly's dance style played a role in the 'masculinization of dance', and combatted a popular perception of dancing as an effeminate activity (Becker and Williams 2008, 305). He danced in masculine clothing, and 'played the average American man' in his films, dancing as 'a baseball player, a sailor, a hoofer, a pirate, a boxing manager, a movie star, a buddy of cartoon characters, etc' (Becker and Williams 2008, 305-306). The scenes featuring Kelly in *Les Demoiselles* are the film's most sustained engagement with the conventions of the representation of heterosexuality, and they make straightforward use of Kelly's carefully self-curated image of 'average' American masculinity (Cohan 2005, 152-159). These qualities are invoked by, among other things, his simple clothes, his solo dance number 'Andy in Love, which see him interacting with sailors and children and performing actions like play fighting, and his white convertible, an item which

Demy also used to connote American-ness in *Lola*. Demy's direction, and Kelly's performance in scenes of romance, emphasise the thin and citational nature of the character of Andy: his two scenes with Solange rely for their meaning on invocations of Kelly's previous roles and the tropes and conventions of romance in the Hollywood musical.

Richard Dyer describes four types of dance steps which occur in couple-dances in American musicals, which tend to be used at different times in a musical in order to mark a man and a woman's progress from being relative equals, and acquaintances, to being a couple made up of a dominant man and a subordinate woman. Most of the dances in *Les Demoiselles* were choreographed by British choreographer Norman Maen, and those danced by Kelly were choreographed by Kelly. These two sets of dances have marked differences in terms of the kinds of arrangements they tend to use and their resulting presentation of heterosexuality. The early numbers choreographed by Maen featuring two dancers or sets of two dancers, such as the same-gender numbers 'La Chanson des jumelles' and 'Les Forains', and the breakup number 'Marins, amis, maris, amants', exclusively feature what Dyer calls side by side and mirroring arrangements (Dyer 2012, 91). The dancers in these numbers dance as equals, in that they are almost always dancing the same moves, or inverse moves, either side-by-side or opposite one another. In the latter number, Judith, Esther, Bill and Etienne dance identical steps, opposite or beside one another. Additionally, Judith and Esther wear tight trousers, as Bill and Etienne do; with no swinging fabric from dresses or skirts, their movements look just as clean and unembellished as those of the men they are dancing with. The lyrics of this number are a confrontation between the two women and the men they are breaking up with, and it could have been choreographed to resemble a

battle of the sexes. Instead the choreography, with its preponderance of side-by-side and mirroring arrangements, positions all four dancers as both similar and equal.

The sequences choreographed and danced by Kelly are different. The dance which unites Andy with Solange is a typical classical couple-dance, dramatizing the union of a couple. It clearly cites another such dance, 'Our Love is Here to Stay' from *An American in Paris*, through shared dance steps which imply a similar relationship between the dance partners. Heterosexuality is inscribed in the respective movements of the man and woman in the dance. Although Solange is bold, forthright and unladylike during the rest of the film—Colomb identifies her as 'butch'—Kelly's choreography feminises her by casting her as timid and physically weak (Colomb 1998, 44). It includes three steps which have Solange shyly turn or attempt to run away from Andy, who grabs her arm to pull her back, as he does with Leslie Caron in 'Our Love is Here to Stay' (fig. 5 c-d). The dance also uses a large number of what Dyer describes as mutually holding steps, and steps which put the couple in relations of dependency, with Solange depending on Andy for physical support as he lifts or holds her body (fig. 5 a-b). These steps put Solange into the role occupied by Leslie Caron in *An American in Paris*, for example—that of a woman who is reluctant, but persuadable. The romantic situation staged in the number, and in many other numbers in classical musicals, is that he is the physically stronger pursuer, and she is the gatekeeper of her sexuality who must, and will, be persuaded to yield.

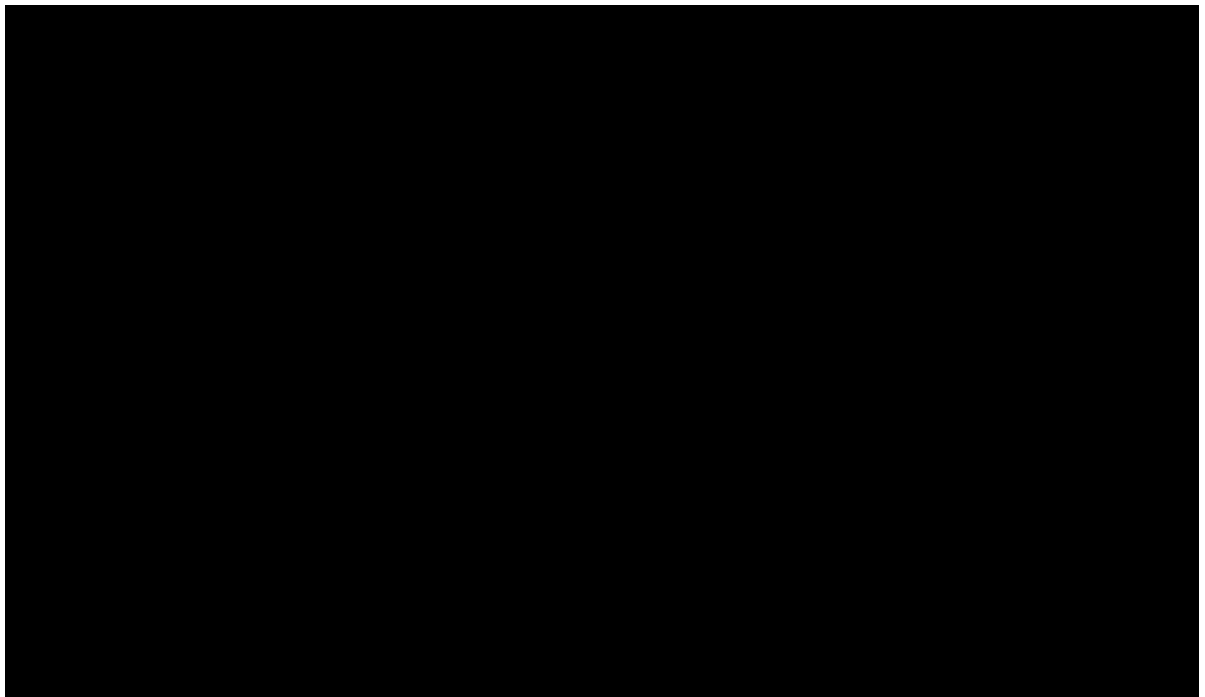


Fig. 5. a-d.

Dyer writes that in heterosexual couple-dance, ‘the nearer you get to sex the less sameness and equality can be tolerated’ (99). While the film’s earlier dances are mostly danced in unison by dancers of both genders, the ballet choreographed by Kelly appears to show Andy and Solange approaching sex; it therefore inscribes difference and inequality onto the characters through their movements.

This ballet, however, is a stand-in for scenes of heterosexual romance that *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* in fact does not have. It narrates a process of seduction by him and reluctant acquiescence by the viewer may have seen in other musicals, but which never takes place in the narrative scenes of this musical. Andy and Solange have only met once, and exchanged very few words. We do not know them, and they do not know each other; they are simply two pieces of the film’s structure, which is crowded with similarly arbitrarily matched heterosexual pairs. Kelly’s choreography perhaps inadvertently emphasises that the romantic relationships in *Les Demoiselles* are partly constructed through the film’s intertextual relationship with other films: they self-consciously evoke existing models and/or specific representations of heterosexual

romance, which calls the viewer to consider that perhaps heterosexual romance is not natural or inevitable, but merely overrepresented.

Darren Waldron argues that Andy and Solange's first scene together theatricalises and parodies heterosexual romance through camp 'excess and hyperbole' (Waldron 2015, 70). It denaturalises romance by being hyper-conventional: it is a charming and meticulous imitation of cinematic romance, in which a young woman meets Gene Kelly and the two fall in love at first sight. From the device by which the two meet—Solange dropping her bag on the floor and the two characters crouching to pick up her scattered possessions—to the dreamy soft focus of the repeated mid-shots of the two characters, this sequence lifts well-worn conventions from any number of romance films and musicals. Throughout the sequence the frantic piano music gets louder, and after Demy reframes the two characters in a wide shot the people who pass through the shot in pairs start to move in a more obviously choreographed fashion, smoothly stepping through the background in unison. The rising music and dancing passers-by situate the instant attraction between Andy and Solange within the world of the musical film—the only world in which it makes sense.

Andy's existence here as the object of Solange's desire is also made inseparable from Kelly's fame and star image. The direction of this scene encourages the viewer to take Kelly in, to appreciate his stature as a star of musicals who appears as an unlikely apparition in both the provincial city of Rochefort and in this film by Demy. The viewer is given a lingering and glamorous view of the star in a shot-reverse shot sequence which aligns the viewer with Solange's desiring perspective on Andy. She is practically speechless, as one would be on finding oneself face-to-face with Gene Kelly. This sequence, and the following solo song-and-dance number, announce Kelly as the star whom the audience has been waiting to see, even though French audiences were

famously unmoved by musicals and Demy was likely much more excited by Kelly's presence in the film than the average spectator would have been. Further, the very classical and allusive style of the sequence situates it nostalgically within a cinematic tradition which the film simultaneously camps and celebrates.

Camp and utopia

Cohan's historical account of camp in the MGM musical frames it as a strategy for survival and communication deployed by the queer people who made and watched musicals (Cohan 2005, 14-15). Camp was, Cohan argues, a means for lesbian, gay and bisexual people to cultivate a subculture underneath the nose of the dominant culture, and to identify and communicate with one another, in a context where to identify openly as queer would be to risk criminalisation and other forms of violence. Beyond seeing camp, as it is manifested in the musical, as a necessary strategy for navigating a hostile world, and a response to bad circumstances, I now wish to propose that it is also a positive means of imagining and screening a happier, queerer world.

In 'Entertainment and Utopia', Dyer proposes that professional entertainment, in particular the musical, presents 'what utopia might feel like' through non-representational signs such as 'colour, texture, movement, rhythm, melody [and] camerawork' (Dyer 1992, 20). These signs can embody emotion, even though they are harder to describe than representational signs such as characters or narrative situations. The non-representational pleasures of entertainment correspond and act as solutions to the pains and problems people experience under capitalism: scarcity ('actual poverty', 'unequal distribution of wealth') is answered with abundance; exhaustion ('alienated labour') with energy; dreariness ('monotony, predictability') with intensity;

manipulation ('advertising', 'sex roles') with transparency; and social fragmentation with community (26). Capitalism promises to solve these problems itself—for example promising abundance through consumerism. Professional entertainment, however, has always been shaped and defined by a labour force made up disproportionately of people who suffer oppression under patriarchy and white supremacy, such that its relationship to conservative capitalist ideology is complex and ambivalent.

'Entertainment and Utopia' offers a way into thinking about how we might connect camp to liberation. It is those elements of *Les Demoiselles* which detach it from lived reality and align it with Babuscio's characteristics of camp which offer an affective impression of a better world. Demy's modification and aestheticisation of the lived environment and of characters' bodies through wardrobe, hair etc; the theatricality of the film's large group dances and other public performances; and Demy's nostalgic and loving use of tropes and images from classical Hollywood, all contribute to a cinematic universe in which insubstantial characters, not weighed down by the norms and constraints of the world we live in, move through a lovelier world with ease and freedom.

Dyer's thesis seems so apt for consideration in a discussion of Demy's cinema because of its attention to the connections between colour, movement, music, and emotion—some of the most striking elements of Demy's films. Furthermore, it seems apt in a discussion of *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* because the film specifically valorises popular entertainment, and particularly the musical, as utopian. It explicitly disdains high art through the figure of Guillaume Lancien, who makes and sells modern, non-representational art, while most of the rest of the characters are engaged with more popular forms such as jazz dance, popular song and representational painting. Scenes featuring Guillaume have a sour, ominous tone which clashes with the light and

whimsical tone of the rest of the film. He wears a harsh shade of red which clashes badly with the pastel-dominated palette of the rest of the film. His first appearance on screen, at his gallery, is soundtracked by an ominous drone as he fires a gun in the direction of the camera, at a balloon full of paint (fig. 6b). By contrast, characters who entertain in the film with their singing and dancing are followed through the streets to a cheerful non-diegetic soundtrack, surrounded by dancers (fig. 6a); they wear pastel colours which match the town's pastel coloured walls and windows; and even their problems and unfulfilled desires are represented in picturesque musical numbers. Thus, the joy of *Les Demoiselles* is situated not only in art, but in mass art and musical entertainment.

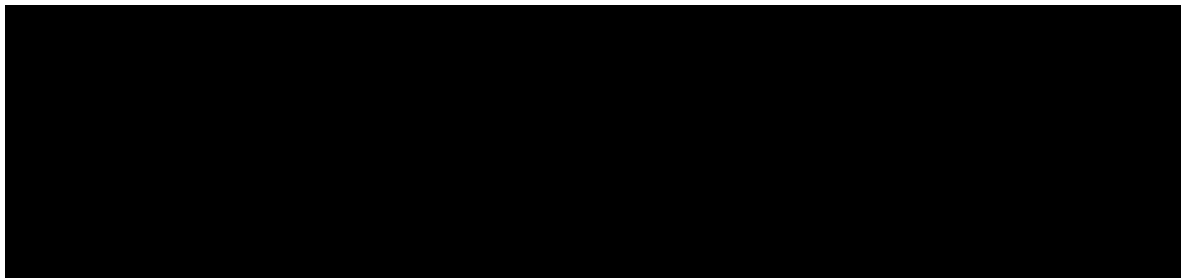


Fig. 6 a-b.

In this way, *Les Demoiselles* appears to have similar values to Hollywood musicals as *Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1953) and *Funny Face* (Stanley Donan, 1957), which maintain through the opposed characteristics of the male and female leads a hierarchical distinction between high art (e.g. ballet, modern dance) and mass art (e.g. musical theatre, fashion photography). These films, like *Les Demoiselles*, ultimately present the triumph of mass art, and valorise entertainment—thus valorising themselves and their medium. In *Les Demoiselles*, high art generates bad feelings and is for mean, serious people, and mass art—Gene Kelly films, jazz dance, pop music—generates good feelings, and is utopian.

It is difficult in some cases to separate the representational from the non-representational. The large group dances in *Les Demoiselles*, for instance the opening number on the Place Colbert, evoke community in an obvious representational sense: they show large numbers of people doing an activity together. This scene, however, also evokes community, energy and abundance through non-representational means such as texture, colour, rhythm, and the choreography of the bodies on screen. The simultaneity of the dancers' steps at almost all moments in this number, regardless of gender, unifies groups of people, whose different costumes assign them different roles and occupations, into a dancing community. The choreography features many expansive gestures: the dancers often reach up or outwards, or kick their legs out while jumping or travelling. The dance also has moments of startling exuberance, such as four quick jumps danced on syncopated beats.

Most of the cuts in this number are on movement, which in addition to the choreography gives the impression of a continuous, unbounded expression of energy. In several of the shots the camera travels smoothly and quickly, for example when following the four original dancers' quick movement around the fountain. The swift pan of the camera to follow the movement of bodies suggests energy in its speed, and attributes to the characters a confidence and a joy in moving through public space. The dance originates among the travelling performers, and has the pretext of setting up for the fair: parts of the scaffolding they need to set up are used as props in the dance. This positions the dance originally as a form of work, or as related to work. Subsequently, however, different groups of people run in from the side of the frame to join in the dance. Some of them belong to identifiable groups—soldiers and sailors, for example—and some do not, like a group of women dressed in different coloured leotards and translucent capes, who dance into frame first alone and then with children. The

streaming into the frame of new dancers suggests abundance. Many of the musical numbers in *Les Demoiselles* serve the narrative purpose of giving biographical information about the characters, but this dance number has none; it is simply an expression of energy and joy.

This opening group dance number sets the tone for a film which was clearly made to be as pleasant and beautiful as possible. It was filmed in the summertime, and the light is always bright and warm. The indoor locations are flooded with light from large, open windows or glass walls. *Les Demoiselles* also has a very large number of distinctive street scenes, many of which follow the characters as they run errands including, repeatedly, fetching Boubou from school. Demy stylises and sets to music the everyday lives of these characters. There is a sense of collectivity and shared happiness in these street scenes created primarily by two things: a large number of verbal or non-verbal interactions between characters and passers-by as they go about their business; and the use of dancers in the background of many shots, who are dancing to music which appears to be non-diegetic but to which they are nonetheless reacting.

The longest street scene, which opens on members of the public gathered around a murder scene, unfolds as a chain of sung interactions between known characters. The melody originates with unnamed bystanders; it is then taken up by Solange and Maxence, then Maxence and Andy, then Andy and Delphine, and finally Delphine, Solange and Boubou. There is synchronised movement filling those parts of the frame which are not otherwise being used, as many shots use deep focus to show two conversing characters in the foreground, and dancers filling the background. The sequence is also very harmonious in terms of its colours, with the painted walls or other features of the landscape in shot often matching the colours of the characters' clothes.

These non-representational signs convey harmony, joy and, through the sharing of the melody and the synchronised dance steps of the background dancers, community.

Colomb's reading of the Bill-Etienne and Delphine-Solange pairings as romantic is subtended in part by the very open and unworried way in which these characters conduct their relationships with one another, in public and private. This takes place partly through representational, and partly through non-representational means. Deneuve and Dorléac dance their opening number, 'La Chanson des jumelles', imperfectly but with great enthusiasm. Their simple steps are synchronised, their complicity is suggested by shared glances and smiles, and they seem to be dancing and singing for fun. This number, and all of their domestic scenes, evoke a happy domesticity between women. They are private, and protective of each other and their privacy, as the viewer sees when they both stand in their doorway to keep Bill and Etienne out when they come to talk to them.

Bill and Etienne appear similarly complicit, frequently looking one another in the eye and sharing affectionate physical contact, in musical numbers and dialogue, but their dances have a different set of connotations. When they dance they take up a lot of space, both horizontally by leaping and twirling across the ground and vertically by jumping in the air. Demy films their movements in wide shots, or even crane shots which take them in from high above the ground. In addition to energy, their dances express pride, and their relationship plays out in public: in the café, an indoor area containing an audience, or in outdoor areas such as the town square, they are on display and command people's attention together.

The camp register of these numbers—the obvious construction of the characters' gendered identities through costume, the self-reflexivity of singing about yourself

directly to camera—does not detract from the scenes’ evocation of the close and affectionate bonds between these people, who freely display their closeness within a fictional community of people and to the cinema audience. This is where the high artifice of the musical connects to liberation: it uses dance, music, colour and so on to imagine free people in a better world.

L’Événement le plus important depuis que l’homme a marché sur la lune

While *Les Demoiselles* remains one of Demy’s greatest successes, with more than 1,400,000 entries in France, *L’Événement le plus important depuis que l’homme a marché sur la lune* is one of his most maligned and forgotten films (Soyer 2013). It was not quite the catastrophe Demy later described it as³⁰, at least not by the standards set by his other films: with 350,379 entries in France in total it sits fifth from the bottom of Demy’s feature films in terms of box office (Soyer 2013)³¹. Given the huge status of its two stars, Catherine Deneuve and Marcello Mastroianni, however, there was good reason to expect much better. Deneuve and Mastroianni, as well as being huge international stars in their own rights, were also a couple at this moment, with a one year-old daughter, and *L’Événement* was their third film together after *Ça n’arrive qu’aux autres* (Nadine Trintignant, 1971) and *La Cagna* (Marco Ferreri, 1972).

The film is a comedy set in Paris, filmed in streets in a small area around Montparnasse and in existing interior spaces, but with fantastically excessive décor and costumes which are themselves one of the most enjoyable aspects of the film. From a

³⁰ In a 1988 interview with *Cahiers* he called *L’Événement* a ‘catastrophe’, and blamed it for ruining the ten years that followed it, during which he barely worked (Daney, Narboni and Toubiana 1982, 6-7).

³¹ Less successful still were Demy’s three films of the 1980s, *Une chambre en ville* (231,624), *Parking* (142,035) and *Trois places pour le 26* (295,017), and *Model Shop* (48,009) (Soyer 2013).

modern vantage point, it is difficult to say whether these aspects of the film's design were typical for 1973, or whether they are a camp exaggeration of an already-outmoded aesthetic. The film concerns a man, Marco Mazzetti (Mastroianni), who discovers that he is pregnant by his partner, Irène de Fontenoy (Deneuve). Dr Chaumont (Raymond Gérôme), the gynaecologist who confirms his pregnancy, asserts that men's bodies are changing due to excess hormones in their food, and that Marco will be the first of a great many men to become pregnant. Marco's quiet life as a driving instructor and father to eight year-old Lucas (Benjamin Legrand) is transformed: he becomes an international media sensation thanks to newspapers and the television, and becomes the model for a new line of paternity clothes being made to anticipate future demand as more men become pregnant. When his pregnancy is at seven months, however, he has an X-ray and it is revealed that there is no baby. As newspapers report that 'the pregnant man was a phoney', Marco and Irène resume roles proper to their genders as they get married and Irène reveals that she is pregnant.

Reviews in the film press and popular press were scathing. Many in the film press accused Demy of 'populism', and the singer Mireille Mathieu, who performs the film's title song and whom Irène, Marco and Lucas see in concert during the film, is singled out as a particularly populist and therefore distasteful element of the film. It seems that, although Mathieu was very famous at the time, and very successful with a certain audience, she was considered an unacceptable element of mass culture by film critics. The review in *Écran 73* identified Mathieu as one component of the film's 'cheap, silly populism'; and Michel Grisolia in *Cinéma 73* notes that Marco vomits at her concert, and jokes, 'we've all been there' (Braucourt and Moret 1973, 75; Grisolia 1973, 130).

Jean-Pierre Berthomé attacks Mathieu's appearance as representative of the film's defects generally. He states that Demy had to change the lyrics he had written for the song 'Paris perdu' because it was to be sung in the film by Mathieu, a pop singer, instead of the more 'realist' singer he had imagined. Demy thus 'emasculated' the song's previously 'violent' lyrics, rendering it 'pure musical decoration with no relation to the rest of the plot' (292). The coded masculinism with which Berthomé attacks Mathieu is consistent with the rest of his argument. He claims that 'The real theme of *L'Événement* is that of the mystery of paternity, of its frustrations and its marvels'. This theme, he claims, is lost in the latter half of the film, which concerns 'the social structure which hurries to turn this personal miracle into 'the most important event' (294, 290). He suggests that the film's engagement with the mass media is a mistake, and he suggests that this move from the individual, and masculine (fatherhood, Marco's experiences), to the social, and feminine (advertising, the 'derisory ritual' of TV panel shows), was imposed by the film's producers.

Berthomé gives no textual evidence for the film being a thwarted meditation on the wonders of paternity, perhaps because there is none. It has none of the reverence towards fatherhood which his text suggests: it is characterised overwhelmingly by camp visual excess and approaches Marco's pregnancy as a source of humour. His contention that the film's true political project gets lost along the way is echoed, however, in contemporary assessments of the film. In *Image et son*, Jacqueline Lajeunesse wrote that the film's political themes 'remain embryonic', and that the film is ultimately characterised by 'a feeling of heaviness, of unfinishedness, and, frankly, of mushiness' (Lajeunesse 1973, 133). Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, one of Demy's former New Wave colleagues, said that '*L'Événement* could have been a moral, social or even political tale. It's nothing but a fairy tale' (Violet 2007, 228). Here again we see a critical trope

which haunts the reception of Demy's film: that a film can be frivolous or important; childish or critical; sugary or philosophical; but never both.

By being attentive to camp as a register in Demy's film, I propose to valorise the frivolous, and uncover how the critical can work through and with the sugary.

L'Événement has a particular abundance of the aspect of camp Babuscio calls irony, whose content is 'any highly incongruous contrast between an individual or thing and its context or association' (Babuscio 1993, 20). In the case of *L'Événement*, the major incongruity behind its camp humour is between masculine and feminine, through the narrative of a pregnant man and the woman who impregnated him. A second incongruity is mobilised between the status of its stars, two actors associated with art cinema, high European fashion and dramatic acting, and their roles here as two ordinary parents and small business owners in outrageously silly clothes and a ridiculous situation.

Gender panic

Demy filmed two endings to *L'Événement*, and preferred the one included in the version of the film released in Italy but not in France. It sees Marco collapse in pain before his wedding and apparently give birth, although the camera remains on his face and the birth is indicated with the sound of a baby crying. There is then, confusingly, an iris out, before a quick sequence which shows other men realising they are pregnant, and then the credits. During the birth, a series of mid-shots show Marco and Irène's wedding guests looking on with horror at what is happening to Marco, and the viewer can only imagine what they are seeing. Marco remains fairly calm, and the whole experience only takes about 40 seconds. Of this preferred ending Demy said, 'no-one

wanted it: the distributor rejected it, and the producer too; everyone told me that it wasn't possible to go that far' (Berthomé 2014, 294.) The discomfort produced by the original ending, and the demand that it be replaced by one which denies the film's very premise, suggests that there is something unacceptable about this premise. It seems that Demy's producers and distributors were comfortable enough with the comic premise of a pregnant man, but not comfortable having to ask themselves: where does the baby come out? This, and other worries about there being something wrong with the gendered bodies of the film's characters, are expressed through the film's camp gender-swap humour.

Analyses of *L'Événement* by Schmidt (2005), Père (2010) and Waldron (2015) focus on the film as a feminist text, and place it in the context of the feminist militancy for reproductive rights taking place in France in the early 1970s. All pay particular attention to a scene in which Irène and her clients and coworkers discuss what a future full of pregnant men may mean for women's liberation. If men could get pregnant, they say, the pill would be easily available to anyone, and men would have abortions whenever they wanted, and would not be jailed for it as a woman in 1973 could be. This scene is an obvious engagement with the film's political context, and signals its feminist intent. The years following 1968 saw the rise of the MLF (Mouvement de libération des femmes) and significant progress for women's reproductive rights in France. Women close to Demy such as Catherine Deneuve and Micheline Presle, both of whom star in *L'Événement*, and Agnès Varda, were among many famous signatories of the 'Manifeste des 343'. This letter published in the *Nouvel Observateur* in 1971 declared that the signatories had had illegal abortions. Varda also attended a demonstration at the *procès de Bobigny* in 1972, a significant trial at which a minor who had become pregnant following a rape was not prosecuted for breaking the law by having an illegal

abortion, and neither were the four adults deemed to have helped her. Abortion was legalised in 1975. The contraceptive pill was also made available to all in 1974.

My analysis of *L'Événement* is informed by a piece of the film's social context which has not yet been mentioned by other scholars or critics. In addition to reflecting explicitly on cisgender women's struggle for reproductive rights in the early 1970s, I believe that *L'Événement* also reflects the increasing instability of the wider conceptual and legal frameworks that produce and regulate gender. The film was made at the end of two decades during which transgender women came to prominence in France and internationally as celebrities, artists and activists³². Some did this by publishing autobiographical writing. The artist Michel-Marie Poulain made headlines after publishing *J'ai choisi mon sexe* ('I chose my sex') in 1954; and the actress and dancer Coccinelle published *Coccinelle est lui*, later published in English as *Coccinelle: Reverse Sex*, with Mario A. Costa in 1963³³ (Foerster 2006, 55 & 71.) Coccinelle successfully parlayed the media furore around her sex reassignment surgery in 1958 into a major entertainment career (77). The most publicised event of her life, however, was her 1962 wedding to a cisgender man. The wedding was protested, and provoked a national media scandal as the cisgender public reacted with anger to Coccinelle's 'transformation from star (object of fascination and curiosity in cabarets) to ordinary woman, worthy of love and recognition from society' (79). In 1965, community activist Marie-André founded l'AMAHO (L'Association Aides aux Malades Hormonaux), a

³² All the information that follows is taken from Maxime Foerster's *Histoire des transsexuels en France* (2006), which seems to be the only published text dedicated to French transgender history.

³³ This text is fascinating in how its stated intention—to present Coccinelle and her transition as a medical case—clashes with what is clearly its authors' real intention: to present Coccinelle as a beautiful and glamorous star, and further her celebrity. Coccinelle hints at affairs with men too famous to be named, and talks of her friendships with an eclectic mix of stars including Jean Marais, Marlene Dietrich, Bob Hope, and Brigitte Bardot, although she says the friendship with Bardot had to end after she stole Coccinelle's hairstyle.

support organisation which issued identity documents to transgender people which were supposedly recognised by the police (64). Marie-André believed that being transgender was caused by hormones given to chickens and cows and then ingested by pregnant women, a theory not dissimilar to that used by Dr Chaumont in *L'Événement* to explain Marco's reproductive capacity (66). This was not a popular theory. Finally, in 1973, the first issue of *Tabou*, a monthly magazine for 'sexual minorities', featured an article on transgender people which was sympathetic and urged cisgender gay people to support their transgender friends (117).

The publication of this piece during the year when *L'Événement* was filmed and released demonstrates that by 1973 there was widespread awareness of the existence of transgender people within the cisgender public, even if this awareness came partly from sources which framed them as objects of erotic or grotesque spectacle. I do not mean to suggest that *L'Événement* is a particularly considered meditation on transgender people, their rights or conditions of life, even implicitly. On the contrary, much of its humour is underpinned by a transphobic premise: that femininity in a person assigned male at birth person is funny. I do contend however that the film responds to the increasing presence in public life of transgender people, and their destabilising influence on a regime of gender which holds that there are two sexes and two corresponding genders. It does this mostly by imbuing the gendered bodies of its cisgender protagonists with strangeness, through camp gender-humour and visual excess.

There is a figure in *L'Événement* who, it is implied, is transgender: a friend of Ginou's (Michèle Moretti), Rudolph (uncredited), who wants to know if Marco feels like he is becoming a woman, is asked if he would like to 'change sex', and responds, 'everyone has their fantasy'. Rudolph's presence implies that the concept and vocabulary of the 'sex change' had entered the mainstream. This person appears, it

seems, merely to affirm that Marco is not like them, has no interest in ‘changing sex’, and is nothing more than a married, heterosexual, cisgender pregnant man. These are facts about Marco’s identity that are not challenged by the film’s dialogue or narrative: he remains essentially masculine in his behaviour throughout the film (Waldron 2015, 134). Similarly, Irène is excessively feminine: she cries, faints, shouts and throws herself onto beds when she is upset or does not understand what is happening. The consistent gender-appropriate behaviour of the protagonists, however, is a conservative veneer on what Demy may have thought of as a more futuristic conception of sex and gender.

The film imbues sex and gender as concepts with strangeness and unreliability through the use of images of bodily abnormality, especially concerning sexual and reproductive parts of bodies, those which are used to assign binary sex and gender to people. The most striking example of this is the large gold sculpture of a thumb in gynaecologist Dr Chaumont’s office which greatly resembles a penis. It looks about six feet tall, and comes in and out of shot during scenes at the office, which all concern the medical side of Marco’s pregnancy. These shots have been planned to showcase the strange presence of the thumb, in different positions and from different angles (fig. 7 a-d). It appears in the centre of shots, at their sides, or jutting into them. In its final appearance, the thumb stands tall between Marco and Irène, larger than either of them as they face the camera.

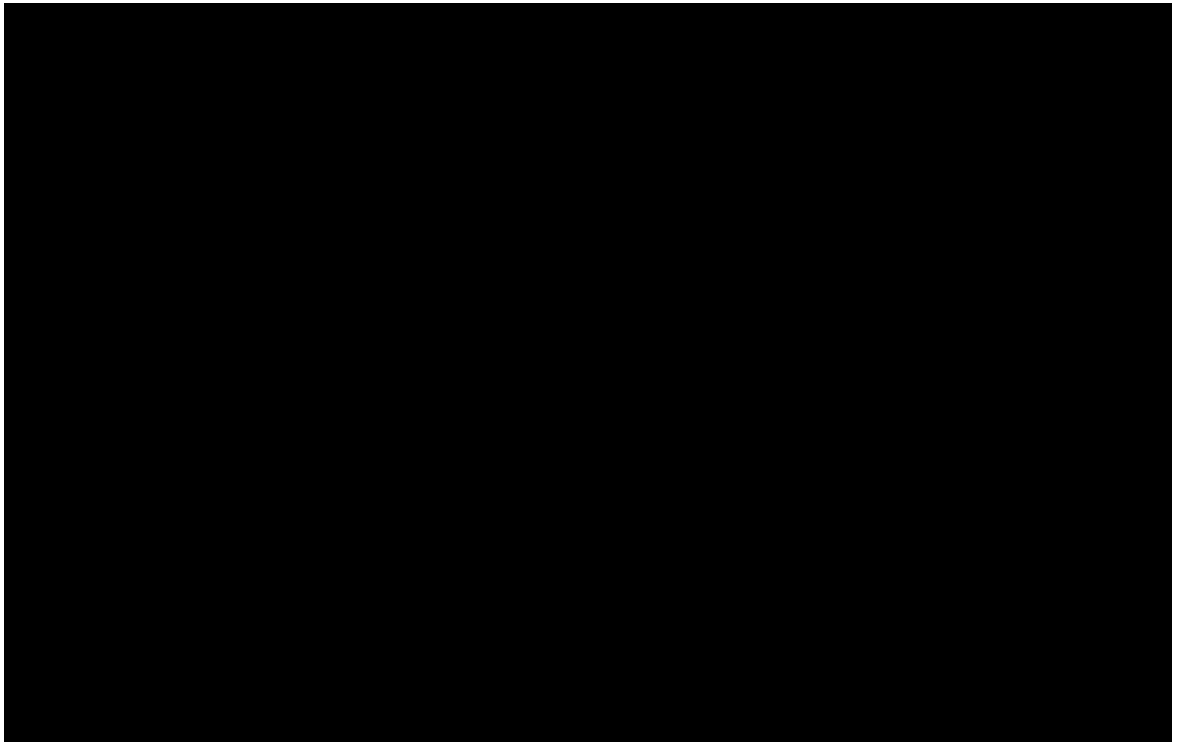


Fig. 7 a-d.

While the dialogue in this scene is fairly euphemistic about how the conception took place, the very large, phallic and eye-catching thumb is an inescapable and troubling presence in the room that suggests strange, futuristic sexuality and bodily abnormality. There are other, less extreme images of bodily distortion in the film. These include Marco's distorted reflection in an outdoor mirror which makes him look far stranger and more pregnant than he is at this point in the film; and a poster for *Le Retour de Frankenstein* (*Frankenstein Must be Destroyed*, Terence Fisher, 1969), a Hammer horror film, visible at the cinema across the road from the driving school. Marco's own fears about his body being freakish, or escaping his control, are suggested in a sequence late in the film during which Dr Chaumont and an estate agent unzip his paternity overalls and pull out from his stomach first a telephone, and then a live chicken.

Dr Chaumont's explanation for the conception, with the use of a life-size diagram of the body drawn on clear plastic, conceals as much as it reveals. He describes

the feminisation of the male body due to excess hormone ingestion, pressing buttons to turn on lights on the diagram to indicate the loss of body hair, the growth of breasts and so on. Finally he slides the diagram over so that another diagram, of a foetus in a womb, is superimposed on the male body pictured. He has described a process which already takes place frequently: the physical transformation people undergo when they take hormones intentionally. At the end of his speech he provides no explanation for how this would lead to the conception of a baby, but his vocal intonation combined with the use of moveable diagrams, buttons and lights, suggests that he has.

This kind of obscurantism is also used later in the film to gloss over details which cannot be accounted for. At an international medical conference Dr Chaumont promises to explain how the birth will work, but first introduces Marco to rapturous applause, at which point Demy cuts to a new scene. An answer is promised, but not given. When Marco and Irène appear on a TV panel show, the host indicates that the process of conception is explained fully in an article in *Le Monde*. The absence of a good explanation for the pregnancy, and the doctor's misdirection, creates the overall impression that there is something untoward and unexplainable in Marco's body, and in the bodies of men generally in the world of the film. The nature of this change, a poorly explained 'feminisation' caused by hormone ingestion, speaks clearly to an unease about the instability of the relationship between sexed bodies and gender, in the context of increased public presence and the demand for gender self-determination by transgender people.

The suppression of the film's original ending suggests that its film's central narrative fact—that a man (Marco) is pregnant, and that his wife (Irène) got him pregnant—was fundamentally unintelligible and unpalatable to the film's producers. It is the subject of jokes among the characters which highlight this unintelligibility. When

Marco's colleague Soumain (Claude Melkhi) finds out about the pregnancy, he asks if Marco 'got screwed'³⁴. Other men joke that it must have been Soumain that got Marco pregnant, and Demy includes a visual joke on the subject: as Marco discusses his pregnancy with men at a bar, Soumain, conspicuous in the foreground, is thrusting his hips at a pinball machine. It is suggested elsewhere in the film that Marco is not 'normal': Dr Delavigne (Micheline Presle) asks in the initial consultation if Marco has 'sexual problems', and Dr Delavigne and Dr Chaumont are at pains to reassure Irène that Marco is 'perfectly constituted' and 'not homosexual'. The fact that Irène got Marco pregnant is also met with extreme incredulity, by Irène herself, and anyone she tells about the pregnancy. The jokes about Marco and Soumain, and those about Irène, have the same source: they trade on the fact that women, sexually passive, are supposed to be impregnated by men, active. This incomprehension about Marco having been impregnated by a woman, and the jokes, continue to pose the question: in this heterosexual couple, which one is the man?

This is the question which animates much of the film's light humour, which functions mostly from the incongruity of a man doing activities, wearing clothes, or having feelings or experiences associated with women, and vice versa. In other words, it is camp humour, whose content is the incongruous bringing together of a masculinity and femininity. Babuscio names this aspect of camp 'irony', and suggests other types of incongruous contrast which might appear in camp culture including youth/(old) age and high/low status (Babuscio 1993, 20-21). The shot in which Irène places her hand on Marco's pregnant belly, humorously taking the place of a proprietorial father, shows how his pregnancy has rearranged their positions and made him a mother, and her a father. This exact idea is also used in the sweet scene during which Marco suggests that

³⁴ The script uses the verb *endoffer* which means both 'to sodomise' and 'to trick'.

he and Irène get married. Marco jokes that Irène has to do the responsible thing and marry him, having gotten him pregnant. She is cast here as an irresponsible man, and he as a girl in trouble.

The camp humour of Irène as the child's 'father' rests on her being characterised as oversensitive and highly feminine, just as the humour of Marco as its 'mother' rests on him being a tall, hairy curmudgeon. Demy uses a camp humour based on this incongruous gender situation to subvert the expectation, already established, that Marco has been feminised by pregnancy, and that Irène is somehow virile. A situation in which the viewer, knowing that Marco is pregnant, expects him to faint during a dizzy spell, ends with Irène fainting when she finds out Marco is pregnant. The film continually mines gender and bodies for humour based on incongruity.

Aesthetically, *L'Événement* establishes a clear distinction between men's space and women's space using colour in costume and décor and camera movement. Furthermore, women's space is more social, dynamic and fun. The places Marco spends time outside the home—his office and a local bar—are the site of uninteresting work chat and homophobic jokes. Scenes set in the driving school are dominated by colours such as brown and beige, and characterised by a static camera, with slight panning or cutting used to frame different characters. At the extreme end of the presentation of men's boring professional space is the scene at the medical conference, which comprises distant shots taken from the middle of the audience of Dr Chaumont as he presents Marco's case, and reverse shots of the audience, made up overwhelmingly of men in suits (fig. 8a). The conference attendees sit in rows, and the camera does not move. Irène's salon, meanwhile, is almost overfull with bright colours and varying textures and patterns, in the costumes and set, and is a sociable place as well as a place of business. There is greater camera movement in scenes in the salon, the editing is

faster, and there is more verbal interaction between the many women in the space.

Mirrors and matching costumes playfully double the women in the salon (fig. 8b.)

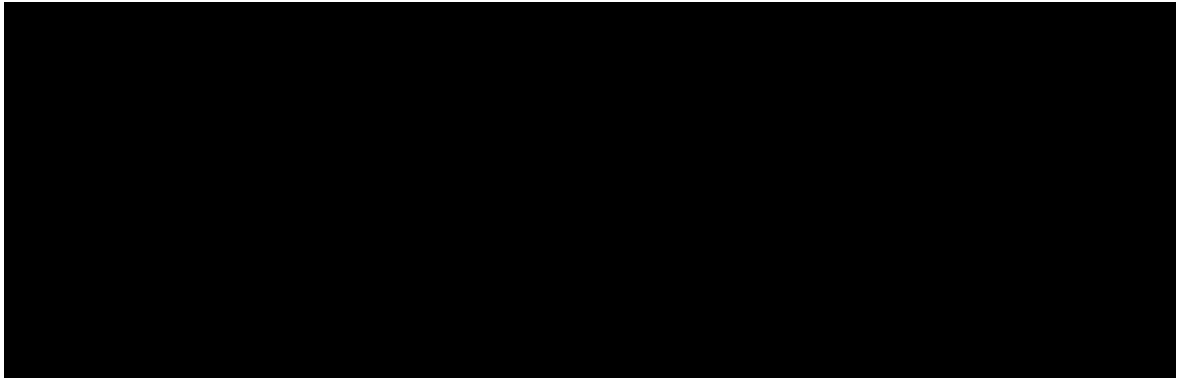


Fig. 8 a-b.

In more ways than critics have previously acknowledged, due to the film's marginal status in Demy's filmography, *L'Événement* is deeply concerned with men and women, their roles, the construction of their identities, and the instability of the binary opposition which is supposed to keep them separate. As we will see, the mediatisation of Marco's pregnancy shows that mass media and entertainment are some of the means through which gender is reproduced.

Mass media and reproduction

Berthomé's contention that scenes which show the social consequences of Marco's pregnancy are not in the spirit of the film is odd, because they are crucial to the plot and take up a lot of the film's running time. Scenes depicting the telling of Marco's story in newspapers, on television and through his role as a model of paternity clothes show him losing control of his image (literal and figurative), and becoming part of a public discussion about changing regimes of sex and gender. As such, the film concerns two types of reproduction: human biological reproduction; and social reproduction, or

the use of media and technology to disseminate information about gender to the reading/viewing public.

The meeting between Marco and Irène and the Prénatif maternity clothes company bases its humour in the same camp incongruity mobilised in other scenes. The company CEO's speech starts to rhyme as he imagines, and the viewer sees in cutaways, a collection of paternity clothes to suit all seasons. Men in the cutaways stroll faux-casually in front of obvious painted backdrops, wearing stylish clothes which accommodate their pregnant forms. The joke is the same as always: it is simply that these men are pregnant, like women.

Scenes showing Marco's work as a model of paternity clothes forcefully emphasise the mechanical reproduction and serialisation of his image. At a photoshoot, we start on the level of the interpersonal, with two photographers looking into the camera and telling Marco to smile (fig. 9 a-b); the reverse shot is not of Marco, but of a 2-dimensional image of Marco, over which a large paste brush is running up and down (fig. 9c). Demy then cuts to a wider shot, which gives explanatory context to the image: it is a large Prénatif advert, being put up by a man on a ladder (fig. 9d). The backwards track of the camera reveals another poster, and then a pan to the left reveals another, and another, until nine posters have passed through the shot (fig. 9e). The pan continues until the camera is staring up the busy Champs Élysées, with the Arc de Triomphe in the centre of the image (fig. 9f). This sequence of shots has a pattern: it scales up from Marco and the photographers, to one printed image of Marco, to a sequence of images in public, finally landing on a symbol of the city and the nation. Marco's image has been mechanically serialised, and is available for all to see.

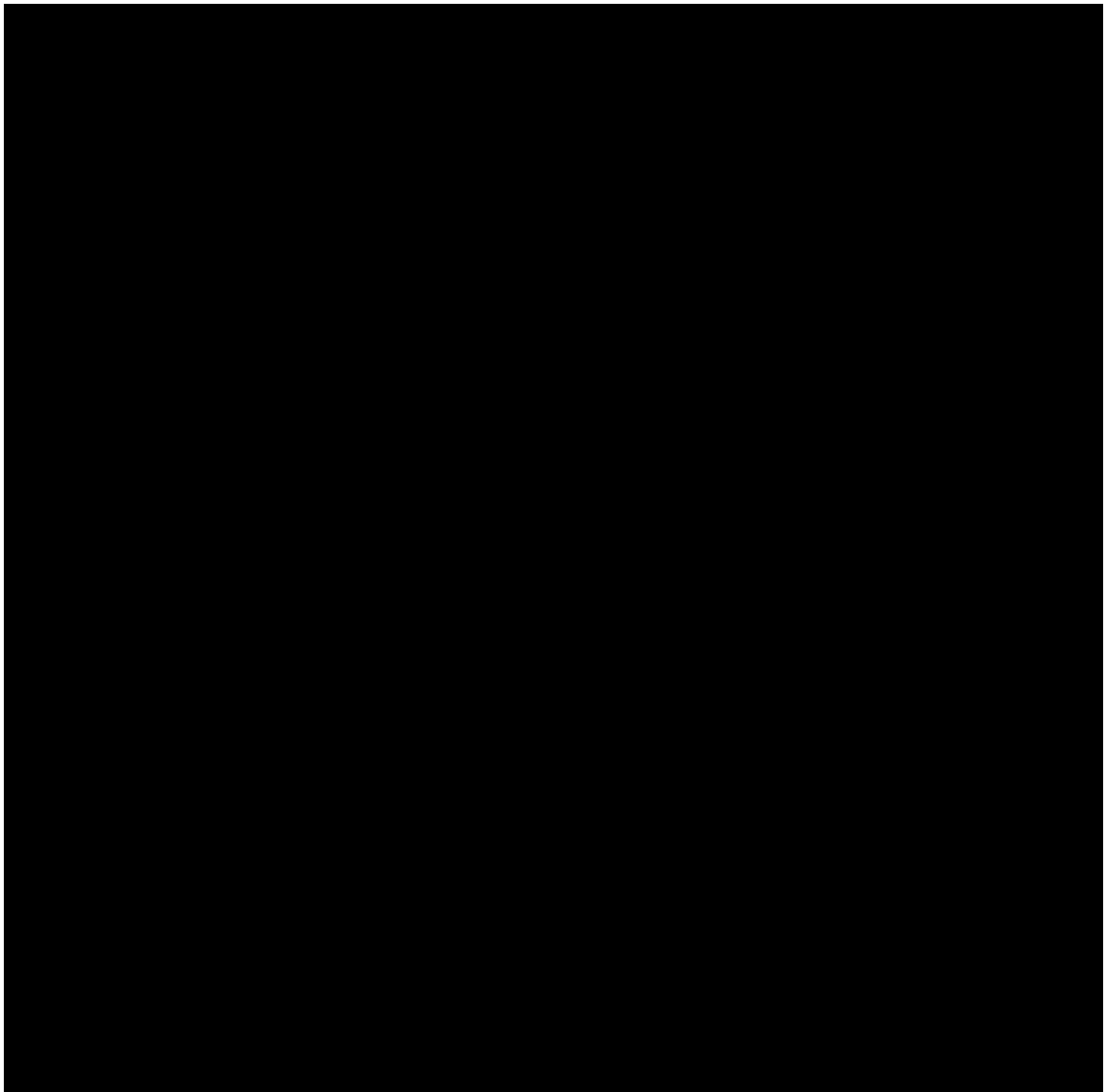


Fig. 9 a-f.

Next, Marco appears at a medical conference, where Dr Chaumont presents the science of male pregnancy to the audience using a diagram, and then presents Marco as a living specimen, to a standing ovation. This sequence immediately precedes a chain of shots and scenes which dramatise the mediatisation of his pregnancy, accompanied by rapid orchestral music which suggests a frenzy. First there is another shot depicting repetition and serialisation: it shows a man reading *Le Monde*, with a headline about Marco; as he walks offscreen the camera follows him, comes to a stop on two other newspapers with headlines such as on display at a newsstand, and then pans down to reveal six others (fig. 10. a-b.).



Fig. 10 a-b.

Next in the sequence is a huge Prénatif advert, the image of Marco with the pushchair, on the Montparnasse tower; next, we see an information board on top of a public building spreading the news that Marco appeared at the medical conference. Finally the music ends as we cut to the inside of a TV studio, as Marco and Irène prepare to appear on a panel. The scene depicting the TV appearance features the third set of serialised and multiplying images: a shot of a bank of screens backstage shows Marco's distorted face first on one of its screens, and then four (fig. 11 a-b).

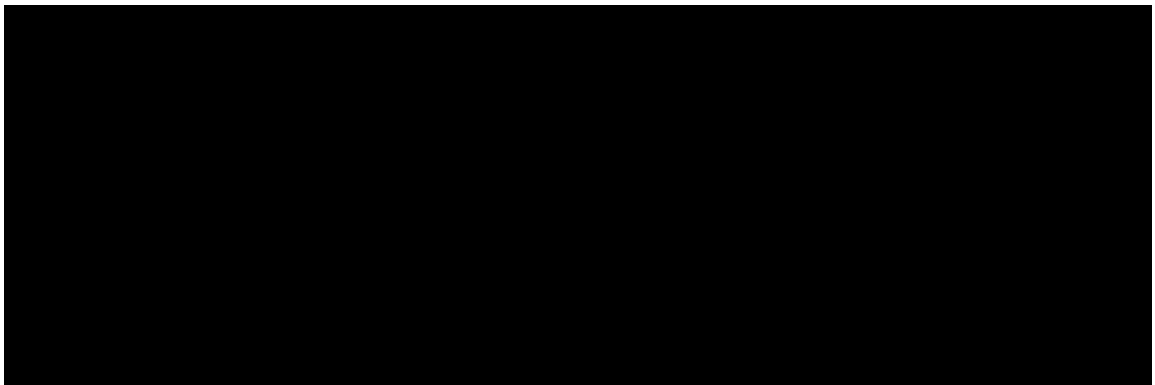


Fig. 11 a-b.

Subsequently, the scene alternates shots of a decontextualized television screen in close-up, which shows how the broadcast looks to those watching at home, and direct shots of Marco, Irène and the other contributors, which could be from the perspective of the cameras in the television studio. There are also other shots of a bank of television screens backstage: the widest contains eight. Through these multiple perspectives from

the TV studio, the viewer is kept aware simultaneously of the people in front of the camera, including the protagonists; of the people working backstage to put the broadcast together; and of the people at home who are watching it.

When Irène's clients and colleagues at the salon discuss Marco's pregnancy earlier in the film, having read about it in the newspaper, they start to imagine and discuss the new possibilities this change could bring. It helps them to reimagine relationships between men and women, in a world in which men are burdened with the some of the same problems as women. The sequence of shots from the medical conference to the TV appearance show the same process taking place on a massive scale. The move from Dr Chaumont's presentation of Marco, with his diagram of a pregnant male body, to the newspaper headlines to the television appearance, demonstrates how new information regarding gender and bodies is being transmitted to an eager public. The mass media involved in this process—newspapers, advertising and television—are part of the technology which create people's expectations for what a body is capable of, and for what people of different genders might do. Thus mass media is shown to be part of the process which makes gender happen.

During this process, Marco's body becomes public, and contested. The towering advertising images of Marco put his body in public, and people argue about it on television. In the version of the film's ending which was seen by audiences in France, Marco and Irène end up assuming their original gendered roles: they get married, and she reveals that she is pregnant. Bookending the scene which establishes these points in the narrative are two shots of a single newspaper. The first is a close-up of the front page, with a headline reading 'The pregnant man was rubbish', and a photograph of Irène and Marco running away from the photographer (fig. 12a.) The newspaper is folded to reveal Marco as its reader. The final shot of the film shows the wedding party

leaving the salon, Soumain throwing a copy of the same newspaper into a wet gutter, and the newspaper being swept away in a stream of muddy water by a broom (fig. 12b.) Where newspapers were a force for multiplying and disseminating scientific and personal information about Marco and his body, here the newspaper is a simple object, singular and disposable. Marco and Irène thus resume the roles into which they are seen to have been born.

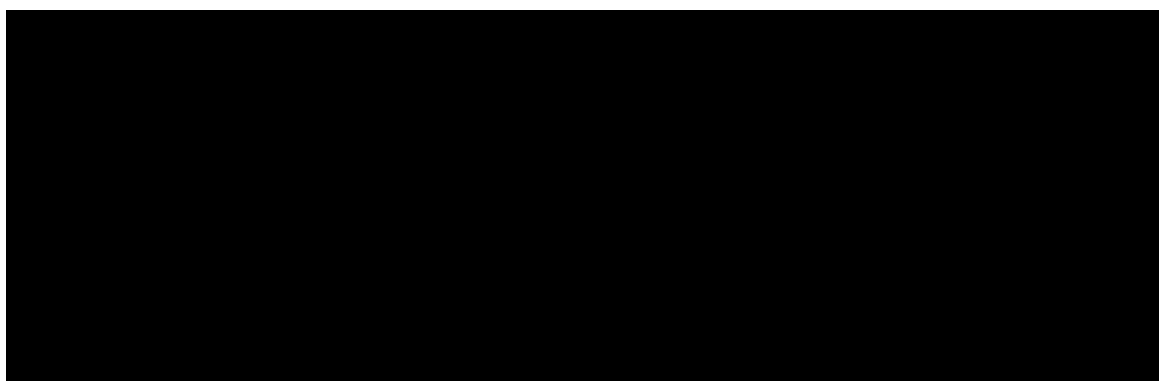


Fig. 12 a-b.

The film's title song, 'L'Événement le plus important depuis que l'homme a marché sur la lune', reflects this turn from the scientific to the personal, and it plays over the film's final shot and fade to black, as the newspaper is being swept away in the gutter. Earlier in the film, Marco's pregnancy is referred to in a US newspaper, read out on a French television panel, as 'The most important event since man walked on the moon'. The song's lyrics, however, actually concern the love between the singer and a romantic partner. In the film's final moments we hear the song's chorus: 'But the most important event since man walked on the moon is you and me, hand in hand, walking down the same path'. This ending, unlike the one Demy had planned, sweeps away all its previous imaginative scientific, social and political speculation like the newspaper in the gutter. Similarly, the title song which makes reference to the world-changing implications of Marco's pregnancy is easily used at this moment to affirm the importance of Marco and Irène's partnership above all else.

Stardom and the star couple

The opening credits of *L'Événement* begin with a mid-shot of Deneuve and Mastroianni, taken from the film, with their faces at intimate proximity, inside a glittering heart (fig. 13a). Their names appear simultaneously on the screen. The film's other stars are introduced individually with their faces in circles rather than hearts (fig. 13b.)

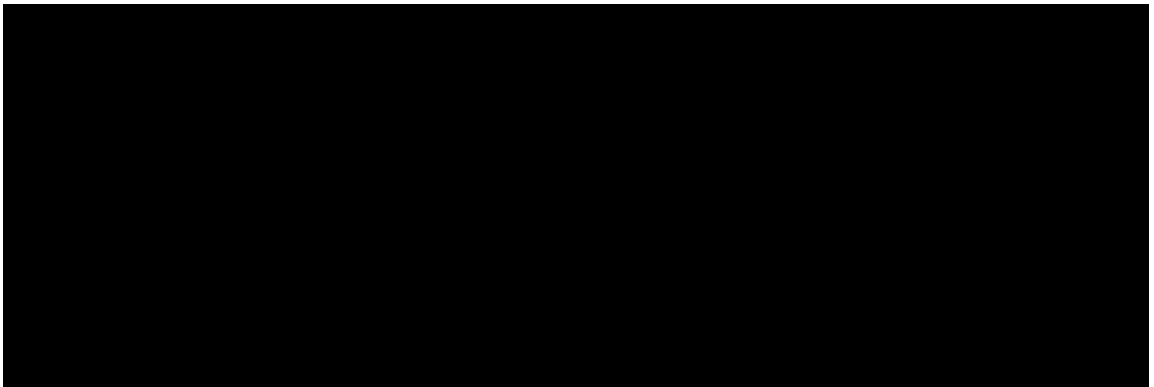


Fig. 13 a-b.

This romantic double billing establishes the Deneuve-Mastroianni pairing, rather than Deneuve and Mastroianni as individuals, as the basis of the film's appeal. The two were something of an international art cinema power couple in the early 1970s, had also already starred in two films together: *Ça n'arrive qu'aux autres*, a drama about a couple whose young child dies; and *La Cagna*, another drama depicting an S&M relationship in which Deneuve plays a woman who kills, and then takes the place of, a man's dog. The latter draws on an association between Deneuve and sexual submissiveness which had existed since *Belle de jour* (1966), and which *L'Événement* turns on its head by casting Deneuve's Irène as an apparently weak and hysterical woman who is nonetheless 'virile' enough to impregnate her husband. *L'Événement* represents a conscious attempt by both Deneuve and Mastroianni to change their image, as a couple and as individuals, by starring in a light comedy (Berthomé 2014, 286). Demy also said

that he was working to change Deneuve's image: he wanted to 'strip from Catherine the aura of a cold, bourgeois woman' (Le Gras 2010, 135).

L'Événement is not mentioned at all in either of the two main academic texts on Deneuve, by Vincendeau (2000) and Downing and Harris (2007). Nonetheless, it represents an important challenge to her existing image, and is perhaps a demonstration of the 'rare capacity for visible self-deconstruction' that Downing and Harris describe in her (Downing and Harris 2007, 5). This deconstruction is most apparent on the level of her clothing and hair. From her performance in *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, as a sweet teenager who is rebellious enough to get pregnant but sensible enough to marry rich afterwards, 'Deneuve evolved a perfectly groomed and well-behaved image', in which her wardrobe and styling and her behaviour were linked (Vincendeau 2000, 201). In this and subsequent films her hair was simple and neat, and her clothes were expensive items by French designers, even when they perhaps should not have been—Deneuve brought her own maternity clothes to shoot *Les Parapluies*, even though, as Anna Karina remarked, it was not plausible for a young shopkeeper's daughter to be wearing Chanel (Deneuve & Toubiana 2013, 181). Deneuve was associated especially with high French fashion since the filming of *Belle de jour*, in which these clothes are an 'index of bourgeois repression' (Vincendeau 2000, 201). This film, in which Deneuve stars as a wealthy, sexually repressed woman who finds liberation in part-time work as a paid submissive, 'produced a successful (that is to say, culturally believable) amalgam: that of the ambiguous 'ice maiden' whose intimidating, cool beauty both covers and suggests intense sexuality' (202).

Deneuve's hair, make-up and clothes in *L'Événement* are a shock to viewers who are familiar with Deneuve's elegant and fashionable image, wrought by films including *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*. They emphasise effort, artificiality and a total

lack of good, restrained, French taste. Many are in man-made fabrics such as fake fur, and their bright colours are especially conspicuous either because the entire outfit is the same colour (all orange, all electric blue, all pink) or because it uses many different colours (blue, green, black and white; pink, purple and orange; etc). Her hair is mostly in big loose waves or smaller curls on top of her head, styles not at all characteristic of her usual controlled hair design, and clearly achieved with the help of styling products. If Deneuve often played women whose prim, conservative outfits suggested repression, her wardrobe in *L'Événement* is an explosion of feminine excess. The long fibres of her fake furs, and the curls around her face, radiate outwards and move as she moves; her accessories and nail polish are supplementary elements of bright colour in outfits already bursting with clashing colours; her huge jackets make her appear top-heavy (fig. 14 a-b.) She is a fascinating and unusual presence on screen in these clothes.

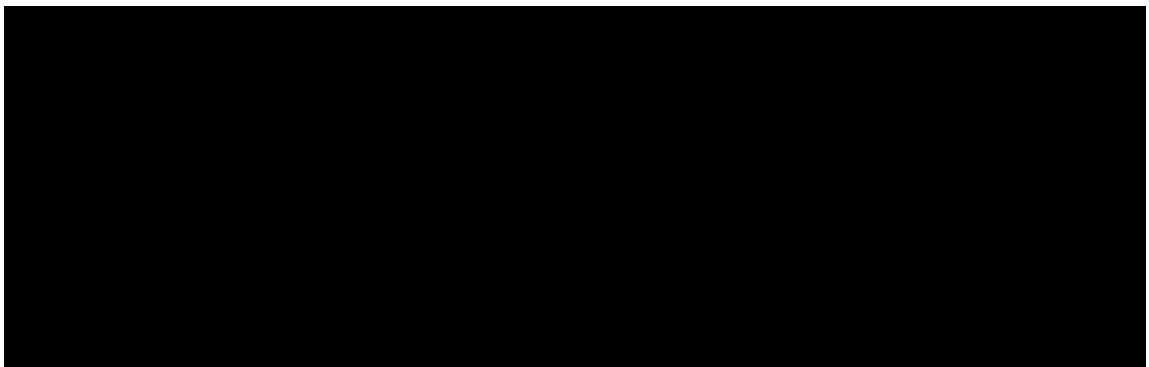


Fig. 14 a-b.

As Downing and Harris argue, Deneuve has consistently chosen roles which comment upon the construction of her image as an elegant ice queen, and Demy was not the last director to ‘camp’ Deneuve’s image this way. A particularly striking subversion of the actor’s reputation for good taste is François Ozon’s *Potiche* (2010), a comedy set in the 1970s in which Deneuve is often resplendent in brightly coloured running gear or suits with clashing patterns.

Mastroianni meanwhile, thanks in large part to his role in *La Dolce Vita* (Fellini, 1960), was associated in the 1960s with Italian design, particularly the suit. Even when playing characters whose masculinity or moral worth was compromised, according to Jacqueline Reich, he ‘still looked fabulous’ in new Italian fashions (Reich 2004, 47). Demy, however, seems to have dressed him in *L’Événement* in such a way as to make him appear less commanding, less masculine and more average. He initially wears a lot of brown and beige, and a lot of cardigans. Later in the film, when the pregnancy has been revealed, he starts to wear more ‘feminine’ colours, such as the all-lilac suit in which he is presented to the international medical congress (fig. 15a). There are moments, too, when his outfit has clearly been coordinated to match his surroundings to comic effect: at home he wears bright orange pyjamas which match the orange bedside lamps but clash with the brown and pink wallpaper (fig. 15b). Along with the pregnancy itself, these clothes make Mastroianni’s body look different, and silly. As with Deneuve, these clothes are a deliberate modification of the image associated with the star.

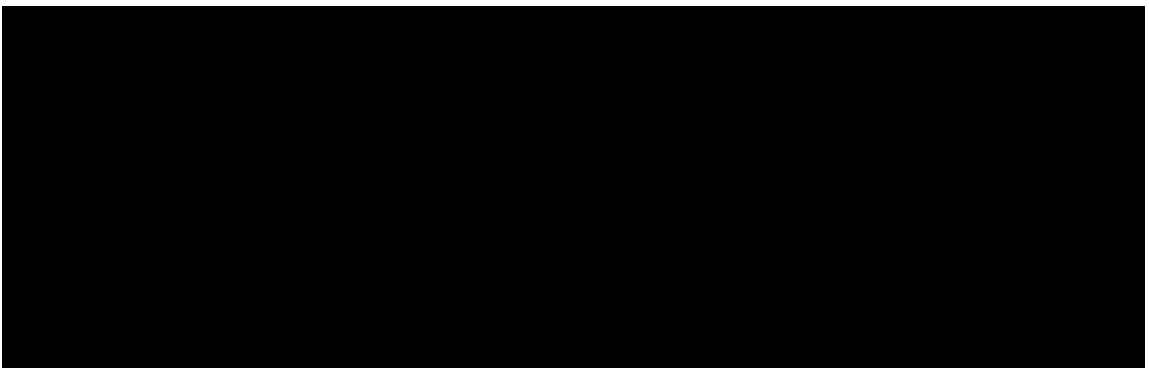


Fig. 15 a-b.

While their clothes clash extravagantly with their star images, however, the gender-swap of the narrative does not, as both Deneuve and Mastroianni were already associated with gender-inappropriate behaviour, or even sexual perversion. Mastroianni has been described endlessly as a Latin lover, an archetype of Mediterranean

heterosexual masculinity often employed in the construction of the images of male Southern European or Latin American stars abroad (Reich 2004, 25-26). Reich argues, however however, that Mastroianni's films see him more often in the role of the *inetto*: 'a man in conflict with an unsettled and at times unsettling political and sexual environment', often a 'cuckold', 'impotent' or 'feminized' (1, 9). Reich cites Mastroianni railing in an interview against being called a Latin lover in an earlier interview:

And I said [in response], 'Have you seen my films?' After *La dolce vita*...I made a film where I played an impotent man: *Il bell'Antonio*. And right after that *Divorce—Italian Style*: a foul cuckold. I also played a pregnant man; I was a homosexual in *A Special Day*. [...] It's been 72 years now and journalists continue to describe me as a Latin Lover... [W]hat am I? A side show?' (Reich 2004, 25.)

The role in *L'Événement*, then, represents a subversion of Mastroianni's usual style and appearance. It does not however necessarily represent a significant departure from the kind of masculinity he tended to incarnate, which was often in some way compromised. In *L'Événement*, as in other films, he is associated with impotence or sexual passivity, and plays a man not suited to the times he is living in. Deneuve, furthermore, as I have already indicated, had played a number of roles since *Les Parapluies* which suggested risky sexual perversion under a seemingly innocent surface, including *Belle de jour* and *La Cagna*. Deneuve and Mastroianni's gender-bending roles in *L'Événement* are therefore more consonant with their images than they may appear.

The imposition on Deneuve and Mastroianni of outrageous clothes and comic circumstances is an example of the camp juxtaposition between high and low status which Babuscio describes. Both actors were associated with European art film thanks to their work with filmmakers such as Buñuel and Polanski (Deneuve) and Fellini (Mastroianni). They had also starred together as a couple in two serious dramatic films. *L'Événement* is a light comedy in which they play a working couple in modest circumstances. Their home is unglamorous: the kitchen is a little dilapidated, its surfaces are crowded with food and other objects, and it doubles as Lucas's bedroom. In several domestic scenes the TV set, an object connoting banal domesticity, dominates the mise-en-scène and the attention of the people in the room. The film pays consistent attention to the television, as a physical object in the couple's home and at the bar where it is discussed with the man who sold it to them, and when Marco and Irène are themselves on a TV show. The audience thus sees a pair of actors associated with the cinema being consistently preoccupied by and involved in what is considered a far lower form of art, or as entertainment rather than art. The combination of two actors associated with high culture and fashion with work in service industries, manmade fabrics and a home slightly too small for their growing family presents a camp commentary on their respective star personas.

Conclusion

Using camp as a reading practice ties together and explains many of the qualities of Demy's films which baffled his contemporaries. Both *L'Événement* and *Les Demoiselles* boast a strange, almost mocking perspective on normative gender, sexuality, and relationships; moments of bad taste and excessive conventionality; and

references to films and genres which do not tend to be valued by the critical establishment. A straight perspective on Demy's cinema sees inconsistency, lapses in taste, and a failure to understand the conventions of the films he was drawing on. Embracing these films as camp films, by contrast, opens up new interpretative possibilities, and implies a sizeable but under-represented queer audience.

In this chapter I have begun to explore how Demy's films participate in popular film genres, and specifically the musical, the genre with which he is most associated. In my section on *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* I described an attitude towards the musical which combines reverence with self-reflexivity, partly through excessive conventionality: a knowing overuse of the aesthetic and narrative tropes of the Hollywood musical. I will continue to discuss issues of self-reflexivity, genericity and citation, as well as emotion, in Chapter 4, with reference to the musical and the melodrama.

Chapter 5: Demy and Hollywood

The aesthetic and narrative conventions of various Hollywood genre films mark many of Demy's films, from *Lola* through to *Trois places pour le 26*. Specifically, as Anne E. Duggan notes, Demy tended to work in popular genres associated with female audiences, such as the melodrama. Films by canonised New Wave filmmakers, by contrast, tended to make films which drew self-consciously on the styles and narratives of masculinised Hollywood genres, such as the crime movie. The perception that Demy was influenced by the wrong type of popular culture, and that his films might attract an audience of women, contributed to his marginalisation and the difficulties he would have working in the latter decades of his career.

This chapter aims to explore what the influence of Hollywood cinema contributes to the style, emotional register and politics of Demy's cinema, using three case studies. While *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Une chambre en ville* have often been described as musicals due to their sung dialogue, I will be considering their relationship to Hollywood melodrama. Unlike musicals, they are sung from start to finish, rather than integrating musical numbers and spoken dialogue. Their subject matter, temporality, and expressive music, colours and mise-en-scène, however, are clearly inspired by melodrama, and this is how I will approach them. Demy's last film, *Trois places pour le 26*, is a dated and excessively conventional homage to the Hollywood musical, as well as to Demy's most celebrated films, and the life and career of its star Yves Montand, who plays himself. It is in the spirit of the tendency of Hollywood musicals of the 1950s which Jane Feuer calls 'conservative reflexivity' (Feuer 1993, 102-106). The self-reflexivity and citationality of *Trois places* (in the form of references to Demy and Montand's previous work, direct address, and the seemingly

deliberate use of tired narrative tropes) are not part of an attempt to critically deconstruct the musical. Rather, they celebrate and advocate for a genre, a director and a star which had long gone out of fashion.

Some scholars have already written about the relationships between these films and Hollywood genre films. Diane Henneon (2012) analyses *Trois places* alongside *Les Demoiselles* in terms of their relationship to the American show musical, and argues that the film reproduces some conventions of the genre, and modifies or rejects others. Waldron describes *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1953) as *Trois place*'s 'most obvious Hollywood antecedent', and argues that the Demy film is self-celebratory, as many musicals from the late studio era are (Waldron 2015, 150). Aside from these two contributions, there seems to be no academic writing on *Trois places*.

As I will discuss, reviews of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Une chambre en ville* fretted a great deal about whether or not the films were melodramas. There is not, however, a great volume of academic writing which considers them as such. On *Une chambre en ville*, Waldron writes: '[b]y setting its story of doomed love against a narrative of social unrest, *Une chambre en ville* complies with the melodrama genre. Consonant with melodramas, social contestation unfolds on the doorstep of the privileged domestic space' (Waldron 2015, 74). Waldron is not specific about what kind of melodrama he is referring to, however, and his engagement with melodrama as a genre or narrative mode is not sustained. Raphaël Lefèvre, in his book on *Une chambre en ville*, outlines how the film recalls Hollywood melodrama in a single paragraph. I will be picking up on and expanding some of Lefèvre and Waldron's points, while also considering the questions of cultural value, address, and emotion which Anglo-American scholars have explored in their work on Hollywood melodrama.

Since Demy's relationship to Hollywood films is often one of self-conscious imitation, citation and homage, Richard Dyer's *Pastiche* offers a productive way of thinking about the nature of this relationship. Pastiche in art is 'a kind of imitation you are meant to know is an imitation', and can involve imitation of a single work, an artist, or a genre (Dyer 2007, 1-2). Dyer affirms that, contrary to received wisdom that pastiche is a distancing, postmodern aesthetic, a piece of art involving pastiche can still be moving. He gives the example of Todd Haynes's *Far from Heaven* (2002), which is an exact stylistic copy of Douglas Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows* (1955), but still moved many viewers to tears. In fact, the pastiche of *Far from Heaven* cues the reader to respond to the film in this way.

[Pastiche] imitates formal means that are themselves ways of evoking, moulding, and eliciting feeling, and thus in the process is able to mobilise feelings even while signalling that it is doing so. Thereby it can, at its best, allow us to feel our connection to the affective frameworks, the structures of feeling, past and present, that we inherit and pass on. That is to say, it can enable us to know ourselves affectively as historical beings (Dyer 2007, 180.)

This chapter will explore in part how Demy uses pastiche of Hollywood genres to place his films in a specific emotional register. I will argue that the films' borrowed aesthetics cue the reader as to how to watch them, or how to feel when watching them. In the two sung films, for example, what could be seen as distancing devices—unnaturalistic décor, costumes and music—do not impede emotional engagement, but instead suggest to the viewer that they should watch these films like melodramas, ready for tearjerking tragedy. And the well-worn narrative tropes and song-and-dance numbers of *Trois places* ask the viewer to watch the film like a musical from Hollywood's studio era, for old-fashioned, escapist entertainment. I will suggest that

our emotional reactions to them come in part from their borrowed aesthetics and narratives, and are therefore collective and historically determined.

Melodrama

Critical perspectives on what exactly melodrama is have changed through the decades. From the late 19th century until the late 1960s, melodrama as a cinematic mode or genre was ‘constituted as the anti-value for a critical field in which tragedy and realism became cornerstones of ‘high’ cultural value, needing protection from mass, ‘melodramatic’ entertainment’ (Gledhill 1987, 5). Melodrama came to be conceived as the bad end of a spectrum of cultural value, Gledhill argues, at the same time as it became associated with female audiences. Although Gledhill’s argument centres on Hollywood, this conception of melodrama is the one in evidence in reviews of Demy’s early films, in which the word *mélodrame* or *mélo* is used simply to indicate that a film resembles ‘bad’ mass culture for women. In the late 1960s, beginning with the family melodramas Douglas Sirk made in the 1950s, auteurist critics began to valorise Hollywood melodramas by arguing that the excessive *mise-en-scène* of these films performed a critical commentary on their bourgeois, reactionary or insignificant narrative content. Andrew Sarris, for example, praised Vincente Minnelli for his ability to ‘transform trash into art’, and wrote that Douglas Sirk’s ‘art transcends the ridiculous, as form comments on content’ (Sarris 1960, 102; 110.) Paul Willemen, similarly, implies that the ‘near-hysterical’, crying audience of a Douglas Sirk film—by which he presumably means women—were not smart enough to appreciate the film’s ironic detachment from its narrative content (Willemen 1971, 65).

These critics ‘delighted in the way the repressed emotions of the characters seemed to be ‘siphoned off’ onto the vivid colours and mute gestures and general hysteria of the *mise-en-scène*, but they were strangely silent about the emotional reactions of audiences to all this hysteria induced by the *mise-en-scène*’ (Williams 1998, 44). The fact that these films were made for an audience of women who may have found their stories genuinely moving is of no interest to these critics. Feminist writers such as Mary Ann Doane, Christine Gledhill, Pam Cook and Jeanine Basinger returned to melodrama and woman’s film in the 1980s and 90s. They considered their address to women, sentimentality, and their narrative content which most often concerned women, their desires and ambitions, and their family or romantic relationships. I will discuss below how scholarly writing on the woman’s film informs my interest in Demy’s melodramas.

As the question of emotion was returning to the academic writing on melodramas, Steve Neale wrote about melodrama as a ‘narrative mode’, rather than a genre, in ‘Melodrama and Tears’ (1989). He argued that the spectator cries in front of melodramas because they know ‘the facts of the situation, the characters’ true feelings, how and why they act, think and feel as they do’, because the narrative has a ‘hierarchical point-of-view structure’, but they can’t change the course of events (Neale 1989, 11). This course of events is marked arbitrarily by ‘[b]lockages, barriers and bars to the fulfilment of desire’. This powerlessness is what produces the spectator’s tears, according to Neale. Linda Williams also writes about tears, but effectively argues against Neale. She argues that, alongside pornography and horror, melodrama is a ‘body genre’, in which ‘the body of the spectator is caught up in an almost involuntary mimicry of the emotion or sensation of the body on the screen’ (Williams 1991, 4). Williams later revised her approach melodrama, arguing that it is not a discrete genre

but ‘the fundamental mode of popular American moving pictures’ (Williams 1998, 42). While different genres use different *effects*, Williams argued, it is usually in the service of melodramatic *affects*: they ‘move us to pathos for protagonists beset by forces more powerful than they and who are perceived as victims’.

For the purposes of this chapter, I take melodrama to mean: a film about people whose circumstances constrain them and do not permit them to live out their desires; whose narrative is characterised by coincidences, surprises, and obstacles on the path to happiness; in which music, mise-en-scène and colour (if relevant) express and intensify the emotion of the moment; which depicts people experiencing strong emotion, and may seek to inspire strong emotion in the audience.

The historical framing of melodrama as a women’s genre is also important to me. Although not all melodramas were necessarily intended for an audience of women, the association of melodramas with women—hysterical, crying, and unable to appreciate the films’ artistry—has bearing on the reception of Demy’s melodramas. Although woman’s films did not exist as a production category in France, because of the smaller and less integrated studio system, there were French melodramas for and about women which Ginette Vincendeau has explored under the rubric of the woman’s film (Vincendeau 1989). These films share a key narrative trope with *Les Parapluies* and *Une chambre en ville*: that of the unplanned pregnancy. Another similarity is that their reviews ‘condemn[ed] the films’ melodramatic aspect or struggl[ed] to locate their worth in spite of it’ (Vincendeau 1989, 51). This tendency also characterises the reception of Demy’s melodramas, as I will discuss below. Furthermore, while they are not necessarily addressed solely to an audience of women, Demy’s films certainly aspire to be part of a tradition of maligned women’s culture which existed in France and Hollywood. They place themselves within this tradition through citation, and through

aesthetic and narrative similarities. This embrace of women's popular culture fed a narrative about Demy's films being unsuitable for an elite male audience, and about Demy being unsuitable for his own cultural moment.

As we shall see, contemporary critics of Demy's cinema did not perceive him to be influenced by Hollywood melodrama, but by a European tradition of melodrama that included opera, literature and women's mass media. Nonetheless, my analysis of Demy's melodramas will draw from the scholarship on Hollywood melodrama. I will first look at their reception, which has strong echoes of the reception of Hollywood melodramas. I will use *mise-en-scène* analysis, a method used by auteurist critics of melodrama, to investigate how colour, music and camera movement express emotion in the films. I do not intend however to separate style from narrative, and I will not argue that these aesthetic techniques are necessarily ironic, or critical. I wish to analyse *mise-en-scène*, narrative content, sentiment and address as interrelated aspects of these films. Like Neale and Williams, I am interested in tears on screen and tears in the audience, and I will consider questions of address, and what may produce these tears. With Dyer's *Pastiche* in mind, I will argue that Demy's melodramas partly derive their emotional impact from their aesthetic and narrative similarity to other weepies or melodramas, and therefore that the melodramatic elements of the films prepare the viewer to draw on their prior experience with such films, and cry.

Les Parapluies de Cherbourg

Les Parapluies is a love story, and a story about compromise, disappointment and loss. It tells the story of the relationship between Guy (Nino Castelnuovo), a 20 year-old mechanic, and Geneviève (Catherine Deneuve), the 17 year-old daughter of a

single mother who owns an umbrella shop. Guy lives with and cares for his elderly aunt Elise (Mireille Perrey). The film comprises three sections, whose names do not refer to the romantic relationship, but to Guy being drafted to fight in Algeria, being absent, and then returning to Cherbourg. In 'The Departure', Guy and Geneviève are an implausibly perfect fantasy of young love, and they fantasise about their future together, running a small business and raising children. They are beautiful and adorable. Soon, however, Guy is drafted. The two sleep together the night before he leaves. Meanwhile, Geneviève's mother, Mme Emery (Anne Vernon) is in debt, and sells a necklace to Roland Cassard (Marc Michel), who takes a shine to her daughter. In 'The Absence', the sweet romance of the film's first part disintegrates, as Geneviève discovers that she is pregnant, Guy's letters become less and less frequent, and Geneviève agrees to marry Roland, fearing that Guy will forget her and not wanting to end up a young unwed mother. In 'The Return', Guy returns from Algeria and finds that the umbrella shop has been turned into a domestic appliance shop, and Geneviève is married. Guy is angry and sad, soon loses his job at the garage, and starts drinking heavily. Elise's death inspires him to take steps towards opening up his own garage, and he marries Madeleine (Ellen Farner), Elise's carer, who has clearly been in love with him for some time. In 1963, on a snowy Christmas Eve, Geneviève stops at his garage by chance, with their daughter in the car. Geneviève and Guy have a terse and awkward conversation; Guy refuses to go out to meet the little girl, and Geneviève leaves.

Les Parapluies continues to be framed as the crowning achievement of Demy's career. Six-frame pieces of reel from the film were given to mourners at Demy's funeral³⁵, as well as being as a reward for supporting the crowdfunder raising money for

³⁵ Blog des Arts, 26th April 2013. <http://www.blog-des-arts.com/art/le-monde-enchante-de-jacques-demy-1931-1990-editions-skira-flammarion>.

the film's digitisation, and one is attached to the first page of each catalogue of the Cinémathèque française exhibition. This small piece of the physical material on which the film was stored derives its significance from the emotional connection the recipient already implicitly feels to the film. *Les Parapluies* has been written about more than any other Demy film, with books, articles and chapters dedicated to the film by Berthomé (1995), Pagnon and Taboulay (1997), Colomb (1998), Lindeperg and Marshall (2000), Juiller (2007), Hill (2008), Herzog (2010), Peacock (2010) and Virtue (2013).

The regard with which the film is held is not new: it had an extraordinary career the year it was released. Most 1964 reviews of the film gush with enthusiasm, surprise and emotion. Words like 'perfect' and 'miracle' recur in reviews in all types of publication – one writes, 'I hold this film to be a kind of exceptional phenomenon, a unique case, a miracle of cinematic alchemy'³⁶. Large numbers of critics heaped praise on the sets and costumes, the colours, the music, the excellent performances, and the evidently close collaboration between Demy, Legrand and set designer Bernard Evein. *Les Parapluies* won the Prix Louis Delluc, the Palme d'or at Cannes—despite having been in cinemas for several months before the festival, which was unusual. It was nominated for five Academy Awards, and was presented at film festivals and shown in cinemas around the world. A small article in *Le Monde* in November 1964 remarks on the film's extraordinary international career, and notes that in the next edition of the Larousse illustrated dictionary, an image from *Les Parapluies* will be used to illustrate the entry on cinema³⁷.

Negative comments about the film were very rare in its contemporary reception, and even the reviewers who criticised an aspect of the film are also very positive about

³⁶ *Libération*, 19th February 1964, unpaginated and with no named author.

³⁷ *Le Monde*, 24th November 1964, unpaginated and with no named author.

it overall³⁸. An examination of more than one hundred reviews from the film press, newspapers and magazines revealed only one which was entirely negative. This review in *Cinéma* even remarks itself on the unanimity of other reviews, citing ‘masterpiece’, ‘marvellous gem’ and ‘unique and admirable work’ as frequently occurring phrases in reviews (Philippe 1964, 124). Having established that he is alone in his opinion, the writer Pierre Philippe goes on to say that *Les Parapluies* is ‘ugly, pointless and inaudible’, a ‘sickly marshmallow’, and a ‘pallid work for good old girls’, and to call Demy a ‘gentle Sunday watercolourist’. This review hints at some of the broader issues that the rest of the reviews raise about melodrama, address and cultural value.

While most reviewers described *Les Parapluies* as a melodrama or *mélo*, a more pejorative term for essentially the same thing, they are not referring to Hollywood melodrama, but rather to a European tradition. The most common points of reference were operas such as Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*³⁹, and Gustave Charpentier’s *Louise*⁴⁰, which was adapted into a filmed opera by Abel Gance in 1939; *Marius*⁴¹ and *Fanny*⁴² by Marcel Pagnol, two plays which were adapted into films in the early 1930s; and elements of women’s written mass culture such as romance serials, novels and magazines. As was the case with *Lola*, critics of *Les Parapluies* worried a great deal that it might be taken for a bad melodrama or woman’s film, for something popular and sentimental with low cultural value. They described the narrative pejoratively as resembling a *histoire a quat’sous* (a ‘threepenny story’)⁴³, a *roman rose*⁴⁴ (a ‘pink

³⁸ An unnamed critic in *La Croix* wrote, ‘I was bored...This doesn’t prevent me from admiring the film’s technical quality’. *La Croix*, 29th February 1964, unpaginated and with no named author.

³⁹ De Baroncelli 1964; Chapier 1964; Leon 1964.

⁴⁰ Leon 1964; Bory 1964; Sadoul 1964; d’Yvoire and Baby 1964; Lachize 1964.

⁴¹ Lachize 1964; Chazal 1964.

⁴² *France observateur*, 28th February 1964, no author, unpaginated.

⁴³ In *Minute*, 27th February 1964, unpaginated and with no named author; and in Aubriant 1964, unpaginated.

⁴⁴ Bellour 1964.

novel', presumably a romance novel), a *feuilleton*⁴⁵ (a serialised story), the *presse du coeur*⁴⁶ (a women's press which featured romantic stories and photo-stories), or they say the story is *à faire pleurer Margot*, which means that it is fit to make people – implicitly women – cry.⁴⁷ The same kind of distaste for women's culture can be read in contemporary reviews of Douglas Sirk's melodramas, according to research by Barbara Klinger. One wrote that *All that Heaven Allows* depicted 'one of those doleful situations so dear to the radio daytime serials'; another said that the characters in the same film 'talk *Ladies' Home Journal*ese'; a third described *Written on the Wind* as 'A streamlined piece of magazine fiction' (Klinger 1993, 77-78).

Having discredited the narrative, many would perform the same move: they would argue that, due to its formal qualities or timeless themes, *Les Parapluies* is too good to be a real melodrama. It seems to sit at an uncomfortable intersection between popular women's culture, thanks to its tearjerking romance narrative, and respectable *auteur* film, thanks to its extraordinary formal qualities and Demy's association with the New Wave. To use Gledhill's phrasing, the reviews attempt to 'protect' this film, which they perceive as a fine *auteur* film, from the stain of melodrama. After describing the narrative, Michel Aubriant wrote in *Paris presse* that 'Demy's sensibility, cinematographer Rabier's taste, Michel Legrand's musical intelligence ennoble this dullness, and make it beautiful, moving and warm' (Aubriant 1964). Similarly, Michel Mardore described narrative as a *feuilleton*, but went on,

But the mise-en-scène and the dialogue is by Jacques Demy, the music by

Michel Legrand, the design by Bernard Evein. This means that we are dealing

⁴⁵ Untitled cutting found in the Bibliothèque du film, Paris, in file KOVACS 70-B14, 3/3.

⁴⁶ From *France nouvelle*, 26th February 1964, page 27, no author; and Narboni 1964, 58.

⁴⁷ This phrase is very common in the reviews. Some examples: Jeander 1964; Demarquez 1964; Sadoul 1964; and a piece by Michel Mardore, found in Bibliothèque du film file KOVACS 70-B14 3/3 with no publication listed.

with the marvellously inspired team behind *Lola* (1960), who, with his new film, have given French cinema a unique masterpiece and a completely original soundtrack (Mardore 1964.)

One unnamed critic even claims in *France nouvelle* that by using the tropes of melodrama, '*Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* destroys melodrama from the inside'⁴⁸. Critics disavow the film's narrative content, which they have clearly identified as belonging to the sphere of women's culture, while praising the form, the skilful work of a number of men⁴⁹. This discourse on Demy is strange because it echoes the discourse which auteurist critics wove around filmmakers like Sirk and Minnelli who worked in Hollywood studios: it treats the story of *Les Parapluies* as if it were a trashy assignment which Demy managed, with the help of other men, to turn into beautiful art, when in fact he wrote it himself.

Georges Sadoul's review in *Lettres françaises* illustrates how class interrelates with gender in assessments of cultural value, which is implicit in other reviews. Sadoul cites dictionary definitions of *mélo* and *mélodrame*, and argues that *Les Parapluies* is not a *mélo*, 'a popular drama with working-class characters whose speech is overblown and sentimental, in which we see a succession of situations as pathetic as they are unrealistic'. Rather, it is a *mélodrame*, a 'nobler' cultural form, a 'sort of tragedy in which music punctuates or underscores the dialogue' (Sadoul 1964). Sadoul isolates two different qualities of melodrama into two distinct cultural forms, which he associates with different social classes – *mélo* is popular, *mélodrame* is noble – and situates *Les Parapluies* within the nobler tradition. He is then able to call it an

⁴⁸ *France nouvelle* no. 958, 26th February 1964, page 27

⁴⁹ While Demy, Legrand, Evein and Rabier are all frequently cited as reasons for the film's quality, the costume designer Jacqueline Moreau is never named, even though reviews frequently praise the film's colours and the matching of the costumes to the sets (D'Yvoire 1964; Bory 1964, 7).

‘antimélo’, placing it in opposition to the low cultural form he has distanced it from.

Amusingly, another critic set up the same distinction but argued the opposite: ‘It’s not a *mélodrame*, but a *mélo*, in the pejorative sense of the term’ (Lachize 1964, 8).

Male critics also constructed two viewers for the film: a male film critic, who can watch the film with an appropriate critical distance; and a working- or middle-class women who can’t control her emotions. Some critics did this by insisting that they were hesitant to see the film: Robert Chazal writes that he went to see it ‘like a beaten dog’ (Chazal 1964). Gérard Legrand’s diary of the Cannes festival of 1964 in *Positif* states four times that he does not intend to see *Les Parapluies* at all (Legrand 1964, 109, 116, 119). *Positif* did not review the film. A few critics did suggest, in oblique terms, that they cried during the film (Duval 1965, Jamet 1964). More, however, made it clear that other people cried, but they did not. Georges Sadoul wrote, ‘I saw people crying near me during certain scenes of the film, and I myself was very moved’ (Sadoul 1964). The most extravagant disavowal of emotion came from Claude Brulé, who wrote a singularly bizarre article entitled ‘Why will all women cry at the *Umbrellas of Cherbourg*?’⁵⁰

At the end of the private screening of the film I attended, just like at the end of screenings at the cinemas where *Les Parapluies* is now being shown, women were crying. All of them. The twenty year olds smoking strong cigarettes and the sixty year-olds with their pearls, the tall brunette beauties and the funny little blondes, the married women, the single women, and the others. All of them! (Brulé 1964.)

⁵⁰ Publication, date and page unknown, found in file KOVACS 70-B14, 3/3 at the Bibliothèque du film in Paris.

Following this taxonomy of crying women, Brulé goes on to describe why *Les Parapluies* is moving in more general terms. He writes, ‘the film forces us to face up to one of the problems which we so dread to think about (with a visceral, superstitious, prehistoric dread): absence. The absence of the person we love.’ He describes what is surely the most heartbreaking moment of the narrative: ‘Guy meets Geneviève, who is passing by chance; they speak, but they have nothing more to say to one another.’ At the end of the article, however, he returns to describing only women: ‘It is because of this cruelty that women cry at *The Umbrellas*: they know that love does not withstand absence’. This piece thereby does two things. Most of the text affirms that *Les Parapluies* stages experiences familiar to anyone who has been through romantic love and disappointment, and thereby elicits strong emotions; but a few framing sentences distance the author from these emotions, and attribute them all to women.

For their part, Demy and Legrand were open about their film being sentimental. Demy cites the desire to make people cry in many interviews on *Les Parapluies*. Looking back on his motivation for making *Les Parapluies* in a 1972 interview on American television, Demy said: ‘I would like to make the people cry. I want to make them cry. So I did, I wrote a story for that purpose, to make them more tender or make them think about their first love, or whatever, and make them really cry. And I succeeded. I was pleased’⁵¹. In footage included in *L’Univers de Jacques Demy*, Michel Legrand says that he and Demy marked the places where they expected the audience would cry as ‘first hankie’, ‘second hankie’, and so on. It is clear that the film has deliberate affective continuity with the Hollywood weepies and woman’s pictures that came before it, while being so formally unique that highbrow critics could disregard its

⁵¹ Footage included in the documentary *Il Était une fois...Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (Marie Genin and Serge July, 2008)

narrative and cast it as an example of good *auteur* film. The reception of *Les Parapluies* illustrates, again, how Demy's films straddle the perceived divide between genre film (associated with a popular female audience) and *auteur* film (associated with an elite male audience).

Sentimental colours, sentimental music

Demy invited an analytical approach to *Les Parapluies* based on colour in an interview in *Lettres françaises*, saying, 'They are false, slightly extravagant colours. Everything is transposed, choices were made to suit the feeling and tone of the scenes. [...] So, they are sentimental colours' (Bellour 1964). Also in a 1964 interview, Legrand said he did not object to the classification of his music as 'sentimental music', and described himself as a romantic (Ancelin 1964, 10.) There are two meanings of 'sentimental' in use here. The first, in 'sentimental colours', signifies that the colours were chosen to suit or express the characters' feelings. The second, in 'sentimental music', paired with Legrand calling himself a romantic, draws on the use of sentimental as a pejorative, designating something as trivial and feminine. Legrand embraces these connotations. *Les Parapluies* is a film in which the form itself is sentimental; in which the sentimental form (expressive mise-en-scène, sung dialogue) expresses sentimental content (a sad love story).

Every item of clothing and strip of wallpaper, every small camera movement or movement of an actor in *Les Parapluies* seems to have been meticulously arranged, coordinated and choreographed to contribute to its meaning and emotional intensity. The music and colours, along with camera movement, are means of storytelling, they suggest and affirm emotional bonds between people, and aid the film's change in mood

from light to dark. As Darren Waldron writes, in *Les Parapluies*, '[a]ffect is extended into, reflected by and contrasted with the colours' (Waldron 2015, 54). It has this in common with other colour melodramas, in which choices of colour in costumes and décor work to align the viewer sympathetically with characters, or externalise their emotions. For example, yellow on costumes and in the background draws our focus and interest to Laura (Deborah Kerr) in *Tea and Sympathy* (Vincente Minnelli, 1956), as two men in the background have a conversation which excludes her (fig. 1a); and to Geneviève in *Les Parapluies*, as she has maternity clothes fitted (fig. 1b). Similarly, bright colours and movement on screen express emotional turmoil in *All that Heaven Allows* (fig. 1c) and *Les Parapluies* (fig. 1d).

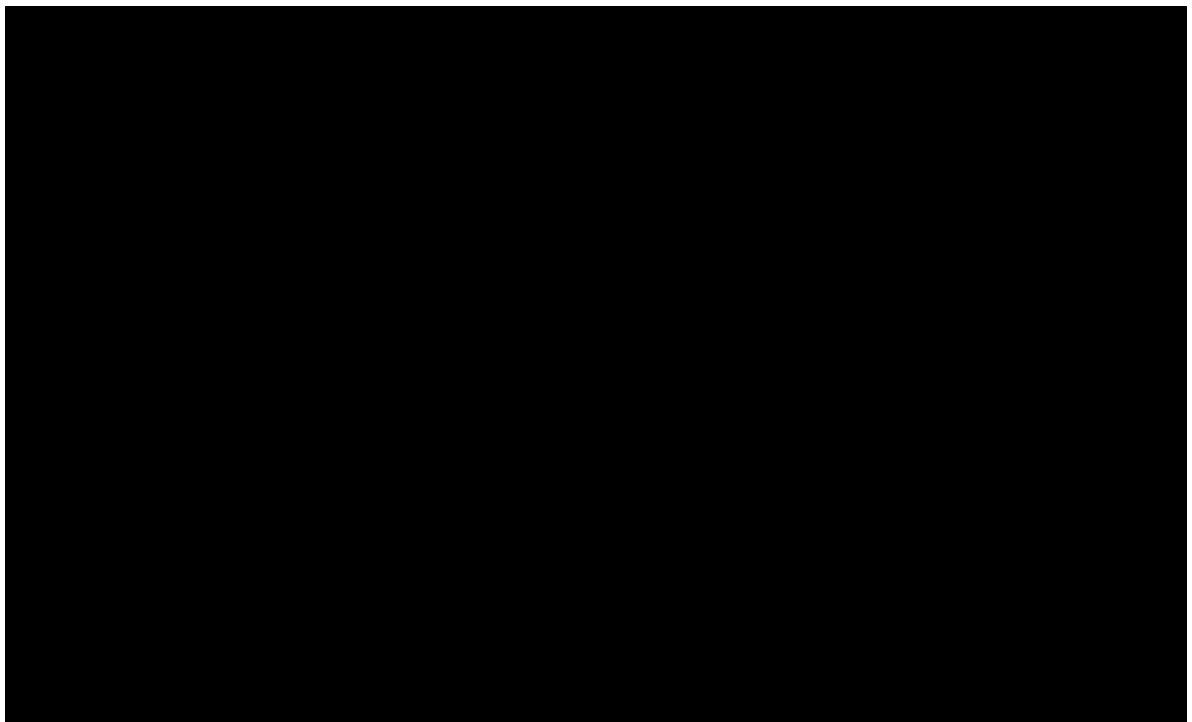


Fig. 1 a-d.

In addition to being, in Demy's words, sentimental, the colours are often also more simply representational. The broad ideological forces Guy and Geneviève are contending with are identified through colour. In early scenes at the garage where Guy works, the dominant colours are red, white and blue, the colours of the French flag (fig. 2a). By contrast, the garage Guy is running at the end of the film, an Esso garage rather

than business owned by an individual, is bright white, as is the interior of the appliance store which replaces the umbrella shop. These choices suggest that while Guy was in Algeria, globalisation and corporatisation have resulted in a loss of French-ness in the city. Kristin Ross highlights the transformation of the umbrella shop into an appliance shop as a pointed example of the ‘capitalist modernization’ which took place in France concurrently with decolonisation (Ross 1995, 96). There is a second politicised use of the colours of the French flag in the film: when Guy tells Geneviève that he has been drafted to fight in Algeria, the background is blue and white, and people with red props and clothing stream through the frame (fig. 2b).

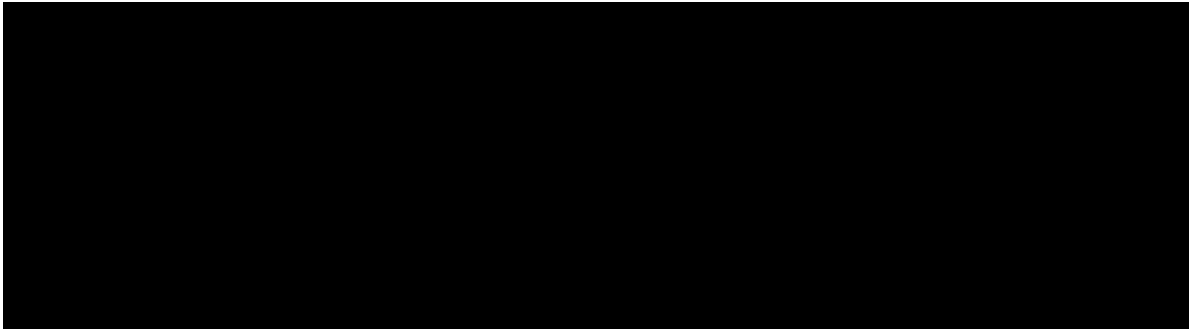


Fig. 2 a -b.

These two uses of colours representing the nation then have two conflicting implications. The film is nostalgic for a provincial French identity which has been lost; and it also implicates the nation in the trouble and pain caused for these two French people by the war. Nonetheless, *Les Parapluies* is an anti-war film, but not an anticolonial film. It has no particular criticism of French colonialism or the brutal colonial war in which Guy is made to participate, beyond its effects on Guy and Geneviève. In this melodrama, the Algerian war is reduced to the status of a car

accident, or someone spontaneously going blind: it is a narrative obstacle to the unity of the couple⁵².

The film's colours also help to delineate the forces of gender, sexuality and class which are so integral to this story. They idealise Guy and Geneviève's pairing, they show their dream disintegrating, and they spell out the imperative for Geneviève to make a respectable marriage once she is pregnant. In 'The departure', choices of clothing and styling emphasise the youth and beauty of the two leads, and gender them. Geneviève dresses in pastel colours such as baby blue, coral and light pink (fig. 3b), and Guy wears dark blue and green, at work and at home, in hardier fabrics. Before their date to the opera, Guy gets his date outfit from his wardrobe; as he throws his light pink shirt down onto the bed, a cut matches the shirt with Geneviève's coral dress as she runs through the street to greet him. The match in colours and the fluid movement across the cut is neat and perfect, and the two continue to be neat, perfect and adorable throughout the sequence. They are often linked together by other items: in their first scene together, Geneviève's yellow cardigan matches Guy's yellow bicycle; and in the scene in which he reveals that he has been drafted, and the departure scene at the train station, the scarf Geneviève is clutching is blue, a colour strongly associated with Guy (fig. 3c).

After she agrees to give up on Guy, Geneviève is only shown wearing white, for her wedding, and brown and black: a huge fur coat clearly signalling her transformation into a rich woman, with black accessories to show that she is in mourning (fig. 3d). Black is also the colour of Roland Cassard's suit and his Mercedes, an item connoting wealth that distinguishes him from Guy, who rides a bicycle.

⁵² For a different perspective, see Virtue 2013. Virtue reads *Les Parapluies* quite literally as an allegory for the war and for decolonisation.

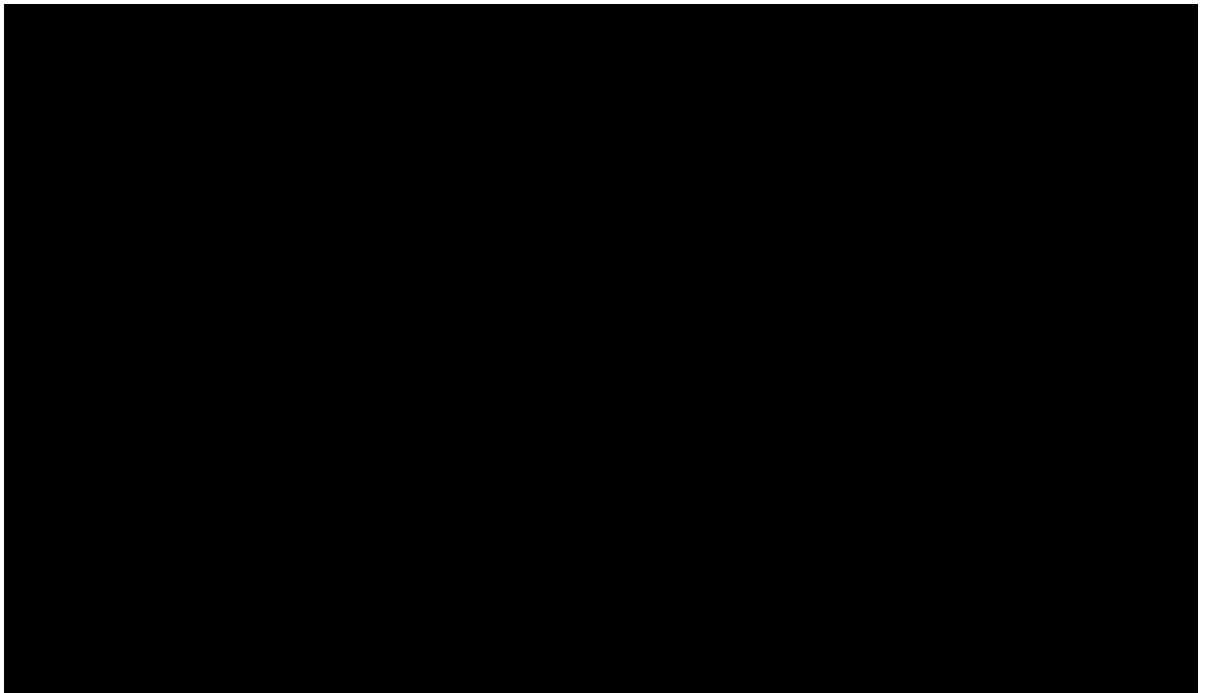


Fig. 3 a-d.

If ‘The Absence’ presents an idealised heterosexual love, ‘The Return’ shows the unromantic side of heterosexual courtship and kinship. *Les Parapluies* has a new colour palette after Geneviève’s wedding. The Cherbourg Guy returns to is washed-out and grey, and Geneviève and Mme Emery’s home, with its beautiful patterned wallpapers, is gone. The dark period during which Guy gets fired, goes to a bar and gets into a fight with the barman, and finally goes to a hotel room with Ginny (Jane Carat), features harsh red tones all over the screen. Items in the street, the walls of the bar and Ginny’s dress are a near-identical shade of bright red. In the final scenes of Guy with his family, and of his conversation with Geneviève at the garage, there are large sections of the frame filled with white, grey or light blue, and the clothes are dark. The world the film presents has transformed from candy-coloured to wintry and grey.

Whereas Geneviève appears, at the beginning of the film in light pastel colours—coral, yellow, baby blue and pink—Madeleine, who acts as Elise’s nurse and companion during her life, most often wears shades of green. This is also the colour of

the room in which Elise's lies throughout the film, and the stairway of her building (fig. 4a and 4b). After she sees Geneviève get married, Madeleine is finally figured in the centre of the frame, after always appearing previously appearing in the margins; she wears bright green and yellow, Spring colours, and her expression betrays the hope that with Geneviève married, she has a chance with Guy (fig. 4c). Later, when they are married, she wears a darker green scarf and coat (fig. 4d). Madeleine wears the colour of the home he grew up in, in which she acted as a caretaker and companion for a family member. This colour scheme affirms that Guy's marriage to Madeleine is a compromise, made so that he can live a comfortable life, be taken care of, and have a family, rather than for love.

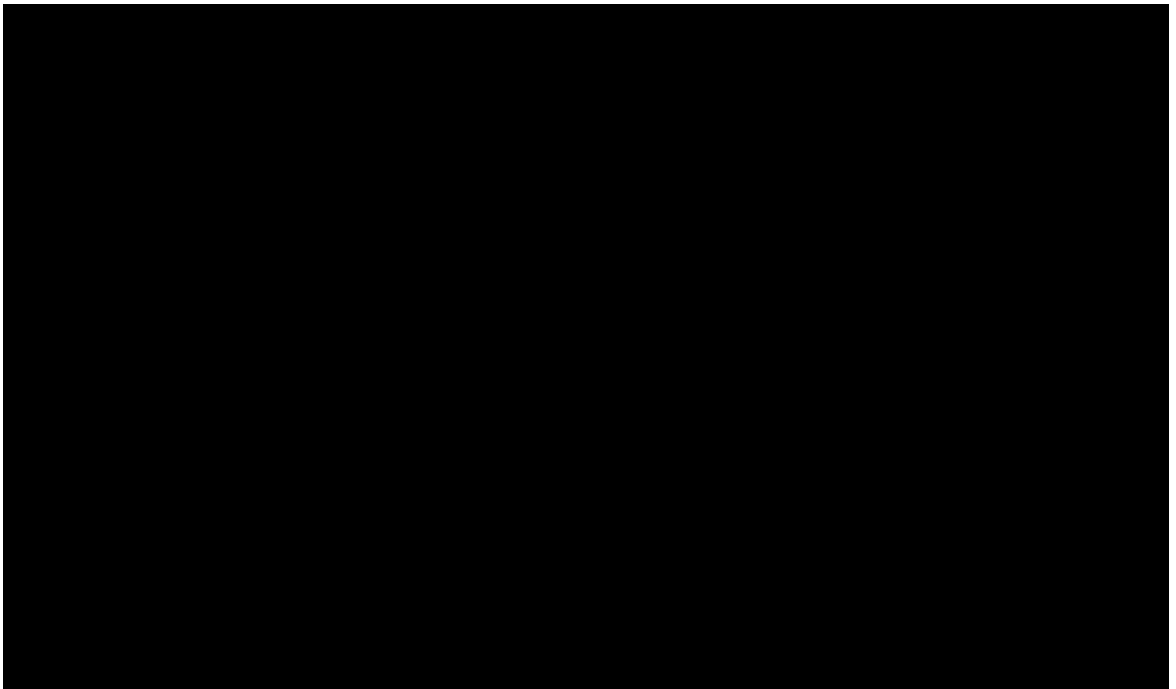


Fig. 4 a-d

The scenes in which Geneviève and Guy each give up on one another and agree to marry different people both have an extraordinary match between the colours of the costumes and the décor (fig. 5a and 5b). In addition to being unnaturalistic and strange, these scenes also both show the characters blending strangely into their environments, at the moment when they agree to choose to compromise, and assimilate into the social

structures of marriage and family. Steven Peacock writes that in the second moment, the ‘orangey, yellowish-brown’ colouring of the latter scene expresses Guy’s uncertainty about the marriage, and ‘presents a smudged muddle of romantic compromise’ (Peacock 2010, 103).

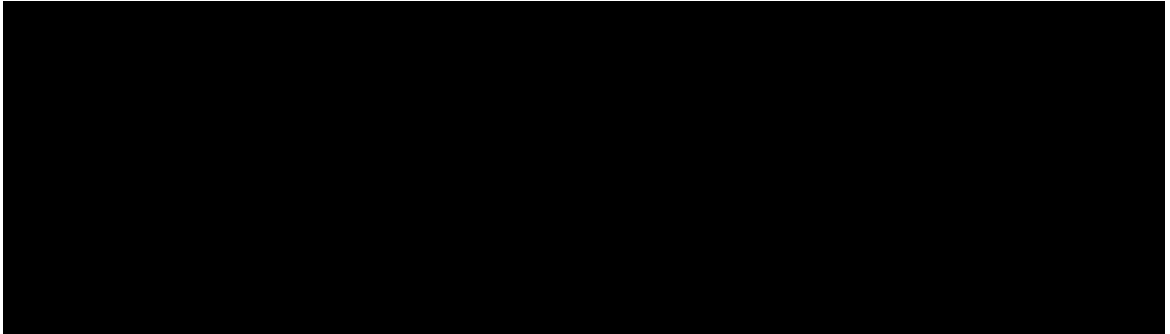


Fig. 5 a-b.

Once they have come to be associated with a person or place, the film’s colours become, to some extent, representational, and directly interpretable as they accompany the events of the narrative. The film’s 22 musical themes are also associated with different people, places and situations, and therefore have a narrative function. Equally, however, the music of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* expresses emotion by mimicking its structures and movements. Suzanne K. Langer explains this function of music thus:

The tonal structures we call ‘music’ bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling—forms of growth and of attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses—not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both—the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt (Langer 1953, 27).

Music is analagous to human emotion, Langer argues, and imitates its shapes and changes. We can use Langer’s argument while taking it out of the cultural vacuum which she creates for it. For example, to people familiar with the systems of Western

music, a piece of music in a minor key sounds sad. This is not an innate property of this combination of notes: it is learned. It can still be said that because of our acquired experience and knowledge of music, and because of music's resemblance to the shapes of human feeling, the music of *Les Parapluies* makes the emotive life of the characters felt (Langer 1953, 27).

The theme sung before Guy's departure, which has been released with the title 'Je ne pourrai jamais vivre sans toi', consists of one melodic phrase, in a minor key, repeated over and over in a pattern. On its first appearance, after Guy tells Geneviève he has been drafted, Guy and Geneviève sing alternating parts which get louder on each repetition. Towards the end, Geneviève interjects in Guy's part, singing *Je t'aime* twice, on ascending notes. The circularity of the melody, and the increasing volume and pitch of the notes, sound like desperation. A spoken version of the scene underscored by sad music would not express the same desperation; the music would function as an accompaniment, rather than a direct expression, through music, of the characters' feelings.

The sung dialogue is used to the same effect throughout the film, and interacts with colour, to express emotion and conflict and to do the work of characterisation. When Geneviève and Mme Emery fight over her plans to marry Guy, Geneviève's slow, sweet vocals and the uncluttered, monochrome (pink) backdrop which matches her pink cardigan mimic her calm and optimism. By contrast, Mme Emery's vocals are shrill and rapid, and she appears in a red jacket which clashes with the pink wallpaper, among umbrellas of various colours. At the jeweller's, the measured, adult conversation about jewels and money between two rich men, Roland Cassard and M. Dubourg is sung in low, sustained notes in a small vocal range. When Geneviève and the desperate Mme Emery arrive, however, the same melody mutates into different forms, with higher

and louder notes over a greater range. All aspects of style function in this film to immerse the viewer in its sentimental world.

In their article on the temporality of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, Lindeperg and Marshall discuss the interplay of the film's recurring musical themes, and how they create in the film a sense of time which is 'characterised by loss rather than completion' (Lindeperg and Marshall 2000, 99). 'Since it is one continuous piece of music', they argue, '*Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* is able to juxtapose past and present, recall the past in the present, anticipate the future, accompany the protagonists' hopes, contrastively undermine their reality' (103). The film's various musical themes return repeatedly and gather layers of meaning on each reappearance. They bring the past into the present. For example, 'Je ne pourrai jamais vivre sans toi' is first heard after Guy announces that he has been drafted, then at the train station, then when Geneviève is crying over Guy's absence in the umbrella shop, and finally at the film's end. The melody thus first expresses Geneviève and Guy's grief before he must leave, but it also soundtracks Guy's absence, carries over into the moment when Geneviève decides to marry Roland, and comes back as an unwelcome reminder of the past in the final scene. As the melody is repeated over time, it acquires resonances and affects such that, by its final iteration, it recalls the happy past in the miserable present. The recurrence of musical themes also suggests a limited repertoire of situations and emotions in which the characters may find themselves, creating a sense of confinement and fatality that is consonant with the conventions of the genre.

‘Why will all women cry at The Umbrellas of Cherbourg?’

For this section, I have borrowed the title of Claude Brulé’s article in order to reflect on the questions of address, gender and sentimentality which *Les Parapluies* and its reception raise. In other words, I plan to ask: why does *Les Parapluies* make people cry? Who does it make cry? And what does it mean that they cry? The critical panic around the crying women in the audience, and the imperative male critics evidently felt to not be confused with these women, affirm that in some sense, *Les Parapluies* is or resembles a woman’s film, a melodrama and a weepie. I do not think that the film is uniquely moving to women, and there are reasons why more women than men might have been crying in the cinema—perhaps because at the same time as sentimentality began to be seen as a hallmark of low, feminine culture, it became unacceptable for men to weep in public (Gledhill 1987, 34). I do also think that the film self-consciously places itself in a tradition of culture for women and appeals, at moments, to the women in the audience.

Steve Neale’s explanation of why a person cries in front of a melodrama posits a distance between the spectator and the characters. The spectator has information the characters need, but is powerless to use it, and prevent whatever emotional disaster they can see unfolding. The pathos of melodrama, Neale writes, comes from this distance and powerlessness. Neale also argues, at the end of his article, that there is pleasure in crying like this, because we know that even though *this* love affair or attempt at happiness has failed, the next one could always succeed. ‘As a demand for satisfaction, [crying] is the vehicle of a wish – a fantasy – that satisfaction is possible, that the object can be restored, the loss eradicated’, Neale writes (Neale 1989, 21). It is my contention that *Les Parapluies* does not offer this comfort.

Une chambre en ville, which I will discuss in my next section, does have the hierarchical point of view structure Neale describes in his article. As the large cast of characters criss-cross over town, important pieces of news miss the people who need them most. The only person with all the important information is the viewer. *Les Parapluies* does not have this point-of-view structure. Still, *Les Parapluies* represents the experience of loss, heartbreak and rancour, in a way that evidently did and continues to move people to tears. This section will speculate as to how a film can still be fully melodramatic, without positioning the spectator as a knowledgeable but powerless external entity.

Dyer's work on pastiche helps to explain why people might find this film so moving when its aesthetics are so outlandish and its narrative is so well-worn. In Dyer's terms, the film's pastiche of aspects of melodrama 'allow[s] us to be conscious of where the means of our being moved comes from, its historicity' (Dyer 2007, 138). This story, of a beautiful love which cannot survive interference from society, is familiar; the bright, expressive colours and incessant emotive music, and the story, place the film in a tradition of Hollywood film melodrama. They tell us what kind of film we are watching, and how to feel about it. The film draws on a history of sad romance films for women, anticipates an audience of women, and anticipates that they will cry. Deborah Thomas's work on Hollywood melodrama and comedy as broad cinematic modes elucidates, in personal terms, how the spectator's body is implicated in this. She writes, 'when I approach films...in which it is clear that the main characters will be dogged by an unforgiving fate and that they will almost certainly be caught and punished in some way, I often have to steel myself to watch them', and that viewers of melodrama may experience 'a defensive tightening or hardening of our bodies' (Thomas 2000, 9; 12).

By borrowing from the codes and conventions of film melodrama, Demy cues the film as to what to expect, and in what state to watch the film.

Furthermore, the film's emotional impact, and I would argue its appeal to women specifically, happen partly through direct address. This technique is used in *Les Parapluies* at the following moments: when Geneviève is in tears, after Guy tells her he has been drafted, and is singing that she will never forget him (fig. 6a); when she has to choose Roland Cassard as her 'king' after finding the bean in the epiphany cake, a moment which foreshadows her agreeing to marry him under pressure (6b); when she is trying on wedding dresses (6c); and at her wedding (6d).

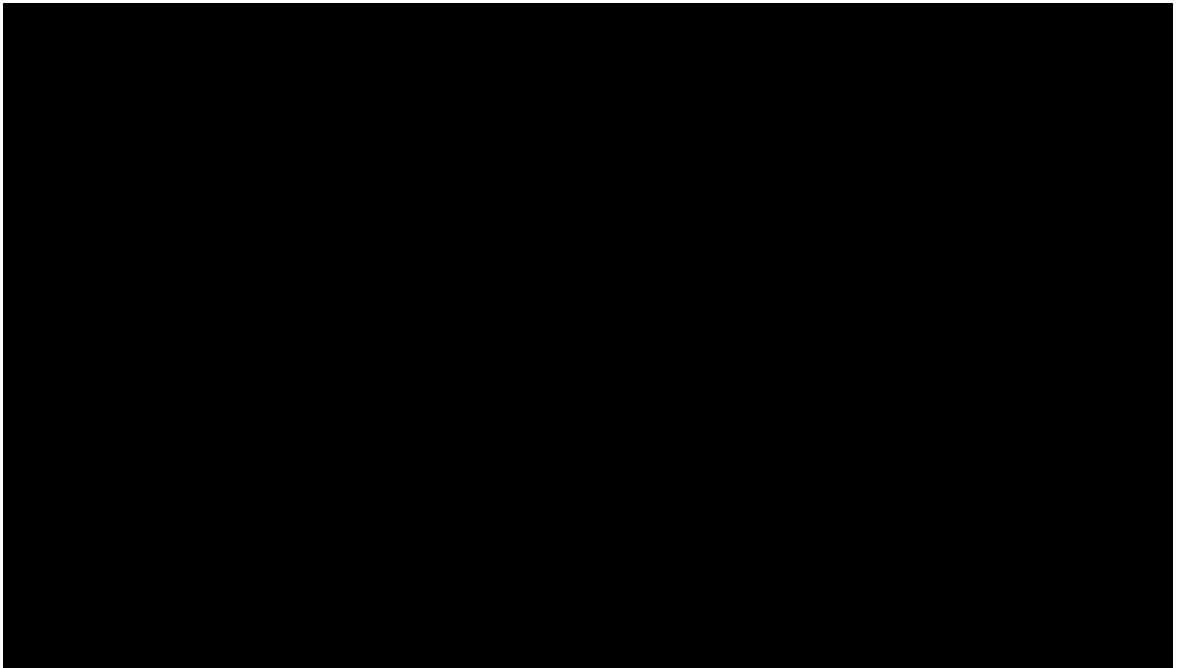


Fig. 6 a-d.

Direct address has been associated with distancing thanks to its use in films by filmmakers like Jean-Luc Godard, who use it to break the visual codes of classical cinema and thus break the spell the film has over the audience. Tom Brown emphasises in his book on the subject, however, that direct address is also often used for different purposes, even (surprisingly often) in classical Hollywood films. Its effects might be: to achieve intimacy with the audience; to 'mark a moment of realisation or a coming-to-

consciousness for that character'; or to 'express themes and / or feelings present elsewhere in the narrative but make them seem more 'uncomplicated, direct, vivid and unqualified'' (Brown 2012, 13; 14; 73, citing Dyer 1992, 23). The direct address in *Les Parapluies* does not attempt to force us to look on the film with detachment, but to implicate us emotionally in some of the ways elaborated by Brown. These four shots in sequence tell a story: Geneviève is first defiant, then in the process of being coerced, and finally acquiescent. It is a sequence of moments in which she is in the process of losing control over her situation, and her gaze at the viewer pleads for sympathy and suggests desperation, while giving the moment a particular affective intensity.

In addition to the first instance of direct address, there are several other shots which make a feature of Geneviève's weeping face including, memorably, when she turns to her mother (offscreen) in the umbrella shop and asks, 'Why am I not dead?' Some critics have asserted that Geneviève is portrayed negatively—Colomb describes her as 'a coward', and Darren Waldron says that she 'fails to affirm any meaningful subjectivity beyond her externally imposed status as a pretty daughter, girlfriend, wife and mother' (Colomb 1998, 42; Waldron 2015, 127). By contrast, I find Geneviève's story extremely moving, and I believe that Demy uses direct address and displays of high emotion to elicit sympathy from a viewer who does not have to be a woman, but will already be disposed towards feeling empathy for someone living under Geneviève's constraints.

Guy's emotional state is not communicated through direct address, but just as vividly through a breakdown in the film's established visual and musical regimes. For example, the second scene of Guy working at the garage uses the exact same exuberant jazz music as the opening garage scene, but his lines do not scan, he uses vulgar language, and his vocals are half-hearted and out of rhythm, as if he does not have the

will to sing the song properly. In a confrontation with his boss, the two men's vocals approach shouting, and, again, do not conform to the song's rhythm as it was established in the first scene.

Once Guy has been fired, as he is shown in long shot leaving the garage, the instrumentation suffers the same sort of breakdown, as the instruments depart from the tune and fizzle out. The next shot shows him storming down the seafront, approaching the camera. There is no cut when Guy gets close to the camera; instead, the camera stays very close to Guy's face and follows him unsteadily along the pavement, before he turns to go into a bar. This is a jarring disturbance to the fairly classical editing and framing used in the film until this point. As Guy enters the bar, the music is relaxed, plodding and somehow louche, and matches Guy's slow gait. The discomfort produced by this breakdown in the organisation of the film's music, camera movement and colour implicate the viewer in Guy's disordered emotional state. Thus, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* transmits the characters' affects in unconventional ways, and positions the viewer too close to, rather than too far away from, its characters' experiences.

Melodramatic time

The action of *Les Parapluies* takes place over a period of six years, and the film draws the viewers attention repeatedly to the passage of time. It is delineated in the subtitles which show the months and years passing, but is also perceptible in changes in characters' hair and costumes, which age them, in the growth of Geneviève's stomach when she is pregnant, and in the generational shift represented by the deaths of Mme Emery and Elise. It sometimes slips away in self-conscious ellipses, and sometimes it drags, as it does in the sequential scenes in which Geneviève is waiting to hear from

Guy and doesn't know when he will be able to come home. The temporal bent of *Les Parapluies*, as Lindeperg and Marshall argue, is 'characterised by loss rather than completion' (Lindeperg and Marshall 2000, 99). This temporality, in addition to being a product of the film's repeated musical themes as these scholars suggest, is also more broadly a typical feature of the melodramatic narrative.

Melodramatic narratives typically consist of repeated, arbitrary obstacles to the fulfilment of desire. The passage of time, often, does not move people forward towards a resolution of their problems, but rather towards a moment in which they can take a full account of everything they have lost. In films such as *Stella Dallas* (King Vidor, 1937), *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945) and *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), swathes of time pass, enough for a child to grow up into an adult, but the time that passes wrenches people apart. This is in stark contrast to, for example, a musical, in which any obstacles to the union of the couple are always only temporary, and this union, which may be secured with a song, and/or a wedding, is incontrovertible. The narrative of *Les Parapluies* is punctuated by twists and turns which prevent Guy and Geneviève from being together, including war, unplanned pregnancy and debt.

There are several moments in the film when time is jarringly elided between match cuts in order to connote sudden loss. In the first, Guy is clutching Geneviève in the street, having told her he has been drafted, and a cut then transplants them into a bar (fig. 8, a-b). In the second, we move between Geneviève's wedding dress fitting and her wedding (fig. 7, c-d). These cuts both show Guy and Geneviève losing control over their lives and plans, as time gets away from them.



Fig. 8 a-b.

In 'The Return', Guy is shown returning to places where he had previously spent time with Geneviève. These moments juxtapose the past with the present, and mimic the way time and place can be experienced by someone dealing with loss (fig. 9 a-d).

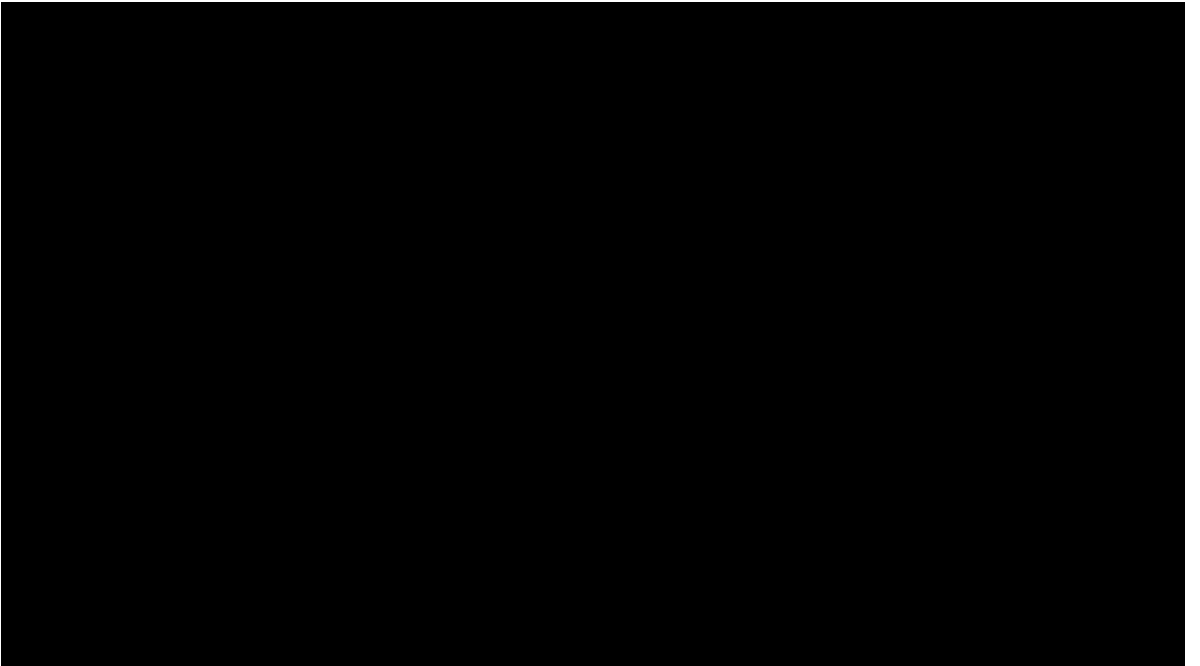


Fig. 9 a-d.

Demy's manipulation of time through editing and other techniques gives the film a subjective temporality: one which skips forward or slows down or skips backwards (through the implied function of memory) in order to reflect how it is experienced by the characters. It is also a time which brings loss. The final scene of *Les Parapluies* uses the film's main love theme to mimic the function of memory by bringing the past into the present, and thus emphasises all that has been lost. As with the

sequence depicting Guy's bad day, the most heartbreaking moments come in the form of disturbances to the film's established visual and musical rhythms. The two characters are filmed with great distances between them, or are alone in the shot. Their sung conversation, in the musical theme associated with their separation and Guy's absence, is quiet and uneven. Sung phrases do not have the expected length; in fact one line, in which Geneviève asks Guy if he would like to meet his daughter, is answered only with a silent shake of the head.

The appearance of an employee of the petrol station who quizzes Geneviève on if she would like petrol, how much and what kind, recalls similar scenes repeated at the beginning and end of *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1945), and *Carol* (Todd Haynes, 2015). The intervening stranger provides one final melodramatic impediment to the fulfilment of the audience's desire, and a frustrating manipulation of their knowledge of the situation. The stranger has not seen what the audience has seen, and does not understand the situation he is disrupting. His banal questions stall what what could be—but turns out not to be—a longed-for reconcilliation.

This final scene is harsh and surprising because there is no great emotional climax: there is neither reconcilliation nor disaster. Thomas Elsaesser's brief summation of the narrative of a melodrama accurately describes this final situation, and more generally describes the temporal bent of the melodrama: 'they emerge as lesser human beings for having become wise and acquiescent to the ways of the world' (Elsaesser 1987, 55).

Conclusion

Les Parapluies has undergone two major restorations. The first was done in 1992, and several articles were published that year to anticipate a screening of the restored version at the Ciné-Mémoire festival. By 1992, as Claude-Marie Trémois wrote in *Télérama*, cinema copies of the film had ‘dark, dirty colours’ and a damaged soundtrack, and VHS copies were even worse (Trémois 1992). Even accounts of the restoration were somewhat sentimental. ‘With time, everything fades’, noted Trémois; ‘Not just Guy and Genevieve’s love, but also film reel.’ Another article announced, ‘Jacques Demy’s melodrama is back to break our hearts and charm our ears’ (Riou 1992). Subsequently, in 2013, Ciné-Tamaris had the film digitised. The funds for the digitisation came from several sources, including a crowdfunding campaign with the title ‘We must save *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*’, which raised €49,029, almost twice the original goal. The crowdfunder, as crowdfunders do, offered rewards for donation which appealed to the huge well of fondness towards the film which evidently still exists in the French public. Rewards included pieces of film reel for small donations and entire 35mm prints for large donations; and the chance for the donor to have their ‘best photo of [themselves] and [their] favourite umbrella’ on a special page on the Ciné-Tamaris website.

The trailer for the restored film on DVD, released in 2013, constructs a viewer who already knows and loves the film. A slightly slowed-down version of the film’s most famous musical theme, ‘Je ne pourrais jamais vivre sans toi’, stripped of much of its instrumentation, plays over a montage of moments of the film during which nobody is singing. The clips edited rhythmically together are mostly very short; they provide no information about the narrative, but they emphasise beauty of the film’s images and its stars, and the newly-restored colours, and they appeal to the viewer’s knowledge and

memory of the film. Locations such as the train station and Guy and Madeleine's garage, which appear briefly, are stirring because the viewer knows what happened there. This particular moment of music was also surely chosen because it is well-known and loved. Varda's *L'Univers de Jacques Demy* includes footage of members of the public singing this melody, which suggests that it is the first thing that comes to mind when you stop people on the street in Paris and ask them about *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*. Cover versions of the song have also been recorded by artists such as Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams and Cher.

From these 'official' sources, one can piece together an idea of the place *Les Parapluies* holds in France's cultural history and memory. They all imply that *Les Parapluies* is seen as enduringly heartbreaking, an object of fond nostalgia, and a key piece of French cinematic history. Unfortunately there are not yet any formal audience studies of *Les Parapluies*, of the kind undertaken by Annette Kuhn on British cinemagoing in the 1930s (2002). The perspectives of women are particularly lacking. Women who were moved by the film were the object of several reviews by male writers in 1964, but there are few accounts by women of their own experience of the film. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, an audience study could be used to create a more detailed emotional history of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, which would offer a new and important perspective on Demy's legacy and his place in French cultural memory.

Une chambre en ville

Une chambre en ville had a long and sometimes fraught history before it finally went into production in 1981. Demy started writing it as a novel in 1955, the year in which it is set, and then wrote several screenplays based on the novel over the decades. Agnès Varda called the 1982 film a ‘replacement film’ for the version Demy would have succeeded in making in the mid-1970s with Catherine Deneuve and Gérard Depardieu, if they had not wanted to sing their own parts (Carrère 1995, 117). Demy’s insistence that they both be dubbed resulted in a painful falling out between Deneuve and Demy which was never resolved (Deneuve 2013, 182). Michel Legrand also declined to work on the project, and so the music was composed by Michel Colombier. The filmmaker was also openly morose in interviews in 1982 about how difficult the years between the failure of *L’Événement*, and the release of *Une chambre* had been. He detailed four projects that had fallen through at various stages of production, and in two separate interviews he said that he had lost ten years of his life (Trémois 1982; de Gasperi, 1982).

Demy eventually managed to finance *Une chambre en ville* in 1981, thanks to his friendship with Dominique Sanda, who was friends with producer Christine Gouze-Rénal. Gouze-Rénal wanted to produce a film starring Sanda, and Sanda recommended Demy’s project (Sanda 2013, 196). As many reviews of *Une chambre en ville* point out, Gouze-Rénal was the sister-in-law of François Mitterand, who was elected in 1981. Demy suggested that this film, set during a strike of dock workers in Nantes in 1955 and bookended by confrontations between working people and the CRS (riot police), could only have been made under a socialist government. ‘It was impossible to speak about social issues under Giscard’, Demy said in an interview conducted during filming. ‘I am making *Une chambre en ville* thanks to the change of government’ (Trémois 1982b).

Upon its release, critical writing about the film itself was quickly eclipsed by a public row about the role of film criticism and the state of the French film industry. This was set off by dozens of film critics signing a manifesto, published in *L'Humanité*, *Télérama* and *Libération*, encouraging the public to see *Une chambre en ville* (Couston 2013). The letter suggested that it was suffering at the box office for being released at the same time as *L'As des as*, that year's annual Jean-Paul Belmondo Christmas blockbuster, directed by Gérard Oury. Some of the same critics later took out advertising space in *Le Monde*, to publish a similar message. These texts were not simply about one film being successful at the box office, and another being unsuccessful: they posited that, more broadly, good French *auteur* film was being squashed by big-budget films of implicitly low quality, with unfairly large budgets for advertising and very wide distribution. This worry is reflected in reviews of *Une chambre en ville*, in which Demy and several critics note a change in France's film culture in the 1970s. Claude Trémois announced that the 70s had seen 'the death of auteur cinema', and a return to the spirit of the *tradition de qualité* of the 1950s (Trémois 1982, 39), as producers had only been willing to fund the safest, most 'polished' projects, often literary adaptations. *L'As des as* was widely perceived as being on the wrong side of this divide between auteur cinema and popular cinema. While *Une chambre en ville* was attributed real artistic value, Gérard Vaugeois wrote that *L'As des as* was merely an 'industrial product', like a sausage (Vaugeois 1982). In his defence of the original letter, Vaugeois also argued, astonishingly, that *L'As des as* had such wide distribution that there existed 'a sociological environment which makes seeing the film unavoidable'.

The degree to which Demy was involved in the public defence of his film is unclear. An especially mean-spirited article by Marcel Ophüls in *American Film*

suggests that Demy must have been aware of the plan, because the Parisian film scene is small and insidious (Ophuls 1983, 38). The two public defences of the film, however, are ultimately unflattering, as they publicise the failure of *Une chambre en ville* to attract an audience. Furthermore, as Raphaël Lefèvre points out, through the critics' actions, Demy 'saw himself filed with the camp of the Parisian *intelligentsia*, when he always thought he was addressing his films to everyone' (Lefèvre 2013, 12). This episode highlights Demy's ambivalent position within the cultural imaginary of French film criticism. Having emerged during the time of the New Wave as an auteur, alongside the filmmaker-critics of *Cahiers*, he has retained a reputation as a representative figure high French film culture. These same critics, however, consistently appear anxious that his films too closely resemble a denigrated form of mass culture targeted at women. For his part, Demy emphasised in interviews throughout his career that he was primarily interested in popular genres, and wished to make enjoyable, intelligible film for everyone. In a 1963 interview, Demy described his attachment to popular, sentimental stories thus:

[I]n my eyes, the world of emotions, which modernists, especially Antonioni, treated as suspect...is held in far too much contempt by we pseudo-intellectuals. Personally, I spent my childhood in a simple social environment where this world of emotions still held an extraordinary freshness and force: my films still have this influence (Mardore 1963).

In an interview on *Une chambre en ville*, he further remarked: 'I like popular cinema, clichés, little songs. *Une chambre en ville* is a ghastly *mélo*, but I need that to communicate, otherwise I lose my footing.' (Fieschi 1982, 7).

Although *Une chambre en ville* does not have the status of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, it is often described as a hidden or neglected gem in Demy's oeuvre, or the best film of his post-*Peau d'âne* years (Andrew 2014; Carrère 1995, 115). It also has an entire book dedicated to it, by Raphaël Lefèvre. Lefèvre's work does not have any central thesis or argument about the film; its aleatory analysis focuses primarily on various aspects of the film's music. He perceptively discusses the effects of sung dialogue, the language of the lyrics, the different musical themes and the meanings they acquire, and the question of where the film fits in the history of musical entertainment. He also makes other observations about acting and the film's visual style. I will draw on Lefèvre's analysis in places, but my aim is to put forward a more coherent argument relating to genre and cultural value, emotion, aesthetics, and how they interrelate in this film. I will be considering in what sense Demy's film can be said to be popular, and how they present popular political struggles; how this historical film deals with the present; and how the expressive codes of melodrama, a popular genre with an imagined audience of women, are used in this film.

The dock workers' strikes depicted in *Une chambre en ville* were a feature of Demy's childhood in Nantes (Berthomé 2014, 342). The film's story is also partly inspired by Demy's father, who moved to Nantes from the countryside as a young man to work on the docks, and rented a room in a rich woman's apartment (Lachize 1982). The figure of Demy's father becomes François Guilbaud (Richard Berry), a metalworker on strike, and the rich woman becomes Margot Langlois (Danielle Darrieux), an aristocrat and the widow of a colonel who died fighting in France's colonies in South East Asia. François is dating Violette (Fabielle Guyon), a young woman who works in a shop and lives with her mother (Anna Gaylor). Margot Langlois has a daughter, Edith (Dominique Sanda), who recently married a television salesman,

Edmond (Michel Piccoli). He is violent, jealous and mean with money, and Edith has started walking around town naked under a fur coat and doing occasional sex work, out of spite. One night, François and Edith meet on the street, and have sex. They fall very quickly in love. During the same night, Edmond goes to Margot's apartment, and warns her that he will kill Edith if he finds that she has been unfaithful. The next day François leaves Violette, even after learning that she is pregnant with his child, because he wants to be with Edith. Edith goes to fetch her things from her house; Edmond will not accept that she is leaving him, and slits his own throat with a razor blade. The next day, during a stand-off between workers and the CRS, François is hit in the head with a police baton after defending another man. He is carried up to Margot's apartment, where he dies; Edith then shoots herself in the chest, as she does not want to live without him.

The narrative has points in common with that of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*. It depicts individuals struggling against larger forces—social class, family, the state—that ultimately crush them. The words *mélodrame* and *mélo* were used in many reviews to describe the film's narrative content, sometimes in combinations such as 'super-mélo', 'awful mélo', 'flamboyant mélo' (twice), and in Demy's own words, 'ghastly mélo' (Rochereau 1982; Copperman 1982; Pantel 1982; Mardore 1982; Celemenski & Fieschi 1982, 7). The reception recalls that of *Les Parapluies* in that critics who admired the film wrote that Demy 'transcends' or 'transfigures' the melodramatic tropes in the narrative, through skilful mise en scène or 'passion' (Siclier 1982; Montaigne 1982). Here, again, one finds the formulation: it would be a melodrama, but it's not, because it's good. Many critics additionally or instead described the film, more admiringly, as a 'tragedy'. Tragedy appears, in French critical discourse, to be a cultural category without negative connotations; unlike melodrama it is not used to denote excess or implausibility, or indicate that a film is aimed at silly, uncultured people.

Making this hierarchy explicit, Robert Chazal wrote in his admiring review that in *Une chambre en ville*, Demy is ‘flirting with melodrama to achieve tragedy’ (Chazal 1982). The implication is that melodrama is the risk, and tragedy is the achievement.

The film’s original poster shows the bodies Edith and François, enormous, rising out of a crowd of people assembled to protest. Behind the crowd is a line of cranes, representing the docks, and on the right edge of the image one of the workers is holding a huge French flag. The image attempts to graft together the film’s two great narrative concerns: the private love between two individuals; and a public claim to rights and a livelihood by a large group of working people. In what follows, I will explore why melodrama is a fitting genre for both of these aspects of Demy’s story about love and class struggle; and how Demy uses the aesthetic conventions of melodrama to unearth what is repressed in Mme Langlois’ aristocratic/bourgeois household.

‘The popular’

The ‘popular’ is a category to which Demy’s cinema seems to aspire, but which is somewhat ill-defined in writing on his work. Lefèvre asks, in his discussion of *Une chambre en ville*, ‘what is inherently ‘popular’? That which has its origins in the people? That which speaks to the people? That which the largest number of people like?’ (Lefèvre 2013, 11). These questions are rhetorical, and it is not the intention of Lefèvre’s book to answer them. The film was clearly not liked by a large number of people: it was seen by a famously small number of people, and whether or not it ‘spoke’ to them is impossible to gauge. As Dyer and Vincendeau point out, the idea of a popular film having its ‘origins in the people’—an invocation of an unmediated folk culture behind the film—is problematic, since ‘most people will never be in a position to make

cinema', and the creation of a film like this is the work of a team of professionals (Dyer and Vincendeau 1992, 3). In French, the word *populaire* has two commonly used meanings. It describes things that have to do with working people, as in the phrase *quartier populaire* (working class neighbourhood); and it has a meaning closer to the English *popular*, denoting things cultural forms or genres that tend to be enjoyed by large numbers of people. Although it did not attract a large audience, *Une chambre en ville* is 'popular' in both of these senses: it depicts working-class lives and struggles; and it draws on various kinds of popular art and entertainment, including melodramatic theatre and cinema, popular opera, and political group song.

The immediate political context in which *Une chambre en ville* was made provides a key piece of its meaning which has largely been ignored by scholars of the film. The 1981 election of a Socialist government led by François Mitterrand by a large majority represented a moment of popular optimism and enthusiasm on the French left. Keith Reader lists this election as one of the 'founding myths of the French Left', alongside the Resistance, the events of May 1968 and the coming to power of the Popular Front in the mid-1930s. Mitterrand's government attempted to capture the spirit of the Popular Front by quickly passing legislation favourable to working and marginalised people. In particular, the new government passed two laws were 'obviously designed to recall' very similar measures taken by the Popular Front: the working week was reduced to 39 hours, and an extra week was added to yearly allocations of paid holiday (Reader 1986, 38).

Several canonical films of the Popular Front, such as Jean Renoir's *La Vie est à nous* (1936) and *La Marseillaise* (1938), were made with the help of Ciné-liberté, an arm of the culture ministry which aimed to promote film education and amateur filmmaking, as well as professional filmmaking which would promote the values of the

new government. *Une chambre en ville* was not made in a collective, and was not part of a wave of left-wing filmmaking. Its presentation of class struggle is mediated through a sentimental fictional narrative. There is, nonetheless, a certain similarity in subject matter and tone. Renoir's Popular Front films, and *Une chambre en ville*, concern worker's history, and use popular genres (newsreel; historical epic; melodrama) in order to address themselves to a large audience. Furthermore, they all present class struggle from the vantage point of an era of left-wing popular mobilisation and optimism under left-wing governments, and accordingly a time when it appeared that the nation's governing institutions held similar values to the people.

La Marseillaise has a very similar gaze on historical events to *Une chambre en ville*. Renoir's account of the Revolution from the perspective of ordinary men from Marseilles presents the struggle for rights and liberty, and against the monarchy, as consonant with the values of the nation. As Pascal Ory puts it: 'the film is constructed around the idea of the French nation rather than the French revolution' (Ory 1986, 25). Ory cites Renoir, who wanted the revolutionaries in the film to be 'clean and tidy', 'well dressed, well behaved'; he even concludes: 'it would be nice to be their friends'. Similarly, Demy's striking dockers are all agreeable and mutually supportive, and their struggle is shown to be in harmony with the ideals of the nation (if not the state it was in in 1955).

There was a history of dockers' strikes in France that was more radical than the history presented in *Une chambre en ville*. In 1951 there were strikes all over France in opposition to state policy, during which dockers refused to load and unload weapons destined for Germany and South-East Asia. The anti-militarist and anti-colonial sentiment that might have been associated with dockers in the 1950s is reshaped by the context of the early 1980s, when the government was felt to be on the side of the

people. Demy had the French flag placed in prominent positions in the frame during the demonstration scenes (fig. 10 a-b). He commented that he did this to ‘put it on a national scale. This strike was important for everyone, for the whole French workers’ movement’ (Reynaert 1982, 5). In the context of a new socialist government, the presence of the flag affirms that the workers’ demands (labour rights, freedom to demonstrate, a good livelihood) correspond to French values. Furthermore, a swastika painted on the outside wall of Mme Langlois’s building alludes to the context in which the Popular Front was formed, against mounting fascism in Europe (Vincendeau and Reader 1986, 1).

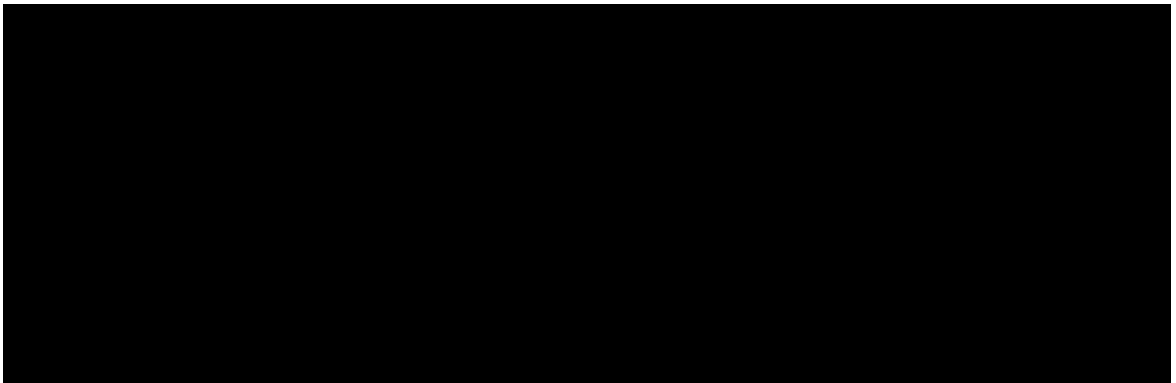


Fig. 10 a-b.

In the film’s opening and closing demonstration scenes, local and national people’s history is dramatized, in popular musical and cinematic styles. These musical moments are not private conversations, sung—a form which remains strange however many times you see it—but rather they show people singing at political gatherings and demonstrations, which happens frequently outside of the cinema. Various books attest that group song has been part of France’s political culture from the Revolution through the Paris commune and beyond (Mason 1996; Darriulat 2010). *La Marseillaise* has many scenes depicting renditions of political songs by large groups, and its narrative development is paralleled by the development of the titular song, from a local song to the anthem of the Revolution (Ory 1986, 21). In *Une chambre en ville*, political song

does not convey the same sense of narrative development: the same sung confrontation between the CRS and workers takes place at the beginning and end of the film, suggesting bitter attrition between the two groups, rather than progress. Nonetheless, these confrontation scenes draw on the same real folk tradition depicted in *La Marseillaise*, and are therefore the moments when the film's sung dialogue appears most 'realistic', and most rooted in a real popular tradition.

These demonstration scenes are also the moments when *Une chambre en ville* most resembles a traditional integrated musical, in which a singing crowd is nothing unusual. The combination of black-and-white photography in the opening scene and a caption ('Nantes 1955') gives the shots a documentary veneer and assert that they dramatize real historical events (fig. 11a). At the same time, Demy's cinematography renders the demonstration spectacular. Its scale is shown to be enormous by wide, high-angle shots. Mirroring shots of the intimidating CRS and the line of demonstrators give the sense of a large-scale battle between hyperbolically polarised forces. The workers are cast as violable—unlike the CRS they are not armed or armoured, and the first close shot of the demonstrators is of a group of women dressed in pale colours, with one holding a baby in the middle of the frame (fig. 11b). They are also attributed moral force by their association with the flag they are carrying, and low, reverent camera angles. The police, meanwhile, are presented as a threatening monolith, with their identical uniforms and shields.

This opening sequence also sets up the fictional story, a drama of social class. A succession of shots pick out François, Damblé (Jean-François Stévenin) and Ménager (Jean-Louis Rolland), the three strikers who are also characters in the film, from the crowd, and later a closer shot isolates François, identifying him as one of the film's protagonists (fig. 11 c-d). In between these are wider shots which emphasise the size of

the crowd, and shots from reverse angles of the CRS. Margot Langlois is filmed from below, looking down at the demonstration with distaste. Three kinds of people exist in this opening scene: the ‘people’ (working class men and women), including François; a faceless enemy sent to repress them; and Margot, an uninvolved figure, judging from a distance.

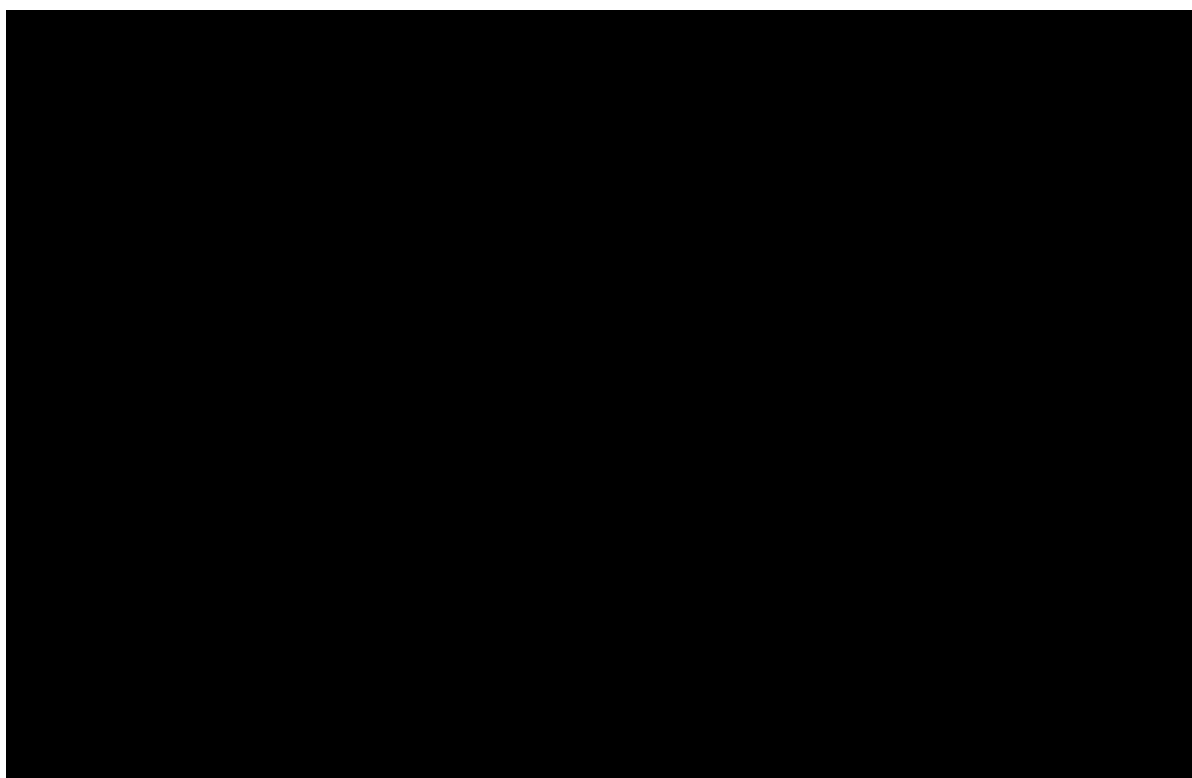


Fig. 11 a-d.

Throughout the film various techniques are used to align the viewer with the workers and against the CRS. During scenes of union meetings in the café, the camera is stationed within the crowd, and the tops of several people’s heads are in the frame, to position the viewer as a participant in this activity (fig. 12a). It is at this meeting that Ménager reads out a list of names of men, including François, who have been fired in retaliation for the strike; this makes the second demonstration a certainty. Before this demonstration, a handheld camera mimics the advance of the workers towards the CRS, putting the viewer on the front line (fig. 12b). The workers, by contrast, are never

filmed from the perspective of a police officer, but always from behind or in front of the line of police.

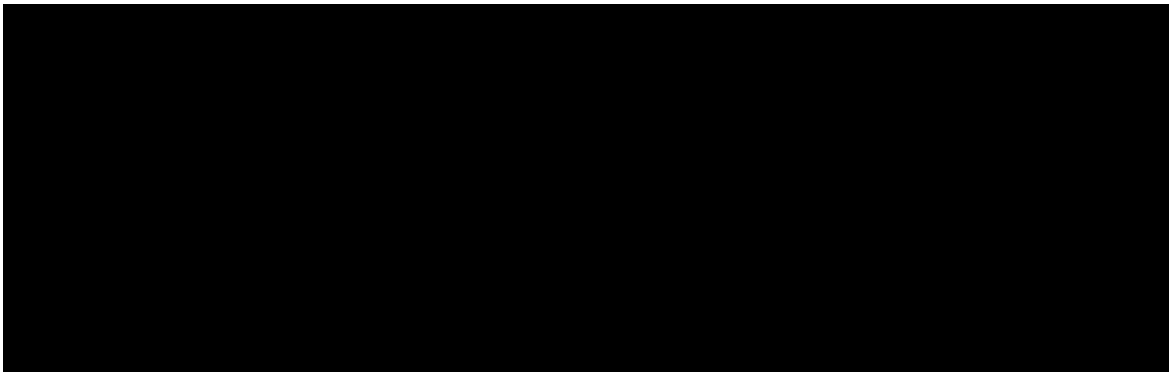


Fig. 12 a-b.

Whereas, as I will discuss below, there is a feeling of simmering madness and sadness in the claustrophobic interior scenes, Demy opens and closes many exterior scenes with crane shots which create the feeling of a large open space, and situate the characters in the wider lived environment. This environment has not been beautified prior to filming, as Cherbourg and Rochefort were before Demy filmed there. This, in tandem with the mostly drab weather, creates a setting which is not magical, but ordinary, and the everyday life of the city continues as the characters live out situations typical of an emotionally fraught, melodramatic narrative: unrequited love, unplanned pregnancy, and so on. The scene in which François tells Violette that he is leaving her is set in a market square in which traders are packing up at the end of their day, and a man is washing discarded lettuces into a gutter with a hose. The many wide and/or high-angle shots of the city also reveal green police vans lurking on the streets or in parks, and suggest that this militaristic response to the strike pervades everyday public life. While people engage in popular politics in street scenes tinged by documentary and musical and historical epic, a ‘ghastly *mélo*’, as Demy put it, plays out in the film’s interior spaces, with Hollywood family melodrama as the dominant aesthetic inspiration.

Melodrama and the bourgeois family home

This section will deploy critical frameworks and concepts developed in studies of Hollywood melodrama to examine the interior scenes of *Une chambre en ville*. In this film, and others, Demy embraces the style and substance of melodrama, and he mixes it in *Une chambre en ville* with the conventions of other popular genres to tell two stories: a love story, and a story of class struggle. I will focus on three areas in which *Une chambre en ville* is aligned with Hollywood melodrama: narrative; décor; and character. Through these means, the film constructs various sub-narratives, to do with family secrets, unhealed grief and class conflict, which run underneath the dominant narratives.

One of these narratives concerns the Langlois family's descent from their previous high social status. This is precipitated by interpersonal events: the former Baronne Langlois' marriage to a non-aristocrat, whose death leaves her in debt; Edith's marriage to a television salesman and into a more modest economic situation; and the death by suicide of her son, Philippe, who would have been expected to carry the family name forward. It can also be situated in the wider historical and political context. Colonel Langlois died fighting in South East Asia three years prior to the narrative present, since which time Cambodia and Laos (in 1953) and South Vietnam (in 1954) had gained independence from France. The social worlds from which the husband and wife come—the imperial military and the aristocracy—are both increasingly irrelevant, as France undergoes modernisation and urbanisation, and is forced to loosen its grip on its empire.

The death of the Colonel, exactly three years prior to the narrative present, constitutes an 'initial traumatic event' which echoes and re-echoes through the

narrative. This phrase is used by Michael Walker to characterise the melodramatic narratives of *Orphans of the Storm* (D. W. Griffith 1921) and *The Searchers* (John Ford 1956), which are constructed through a repetition of a traumatic event which violates the family (Walker 1993, 68). In *Une chambre en ville*, the colonel's death was followed, two years later to the day, by the suicide of Philippe; and the events of the narrative take place a year later. In the manner Walker identifies, this originary disaster does not literally cause further disasters, but is echoed in them—three suicides (Philippe's, Edmond's and Edith's), and one further violent death (François's). Whereas in *Orphans of the Storm* and *The Searchers* the trauma is 'healed' by the narrative, in some melodramas such as Vincente Minnelli's *Home from the Hill* (1956), 'the overall perspective on the dramatized events may be seen as tragic', as the initial traumatic event in the family is not 'healed' but progresses towards a violent end which feels inevitable. *Une chambre en ville* has exactly this form of melodramatic narrative.

Numerous reviews highlighted the ways in which the film foregrounds fate and destiny as guiding forces in characters' lives, and accordingly described it as a tragedy, rather than a melodrama (Montaigne 1982; Lefort 1982; Trémis 1982; Siclier 1982). The film's 'prophetic structure', however, is no less typical of melodrama (Walker 2004, 27.) Edith and François are matched before they meet by several details: François is living in Edith's old bedroom, Edith hears François's name and tries on his cap before they meet, and her tarot reader predicts that she will have an ill-fated relationship with a metalworker. As Lefèvre points out, everything that people say will happen, happens, including Edmond saying he could never live without Edith, and Edith saying she could never live without François (Lefèvre 2013, 40). The weapons with which Edmond and Edith kill themselves—a razor and a gun respectively—are introduced many scenes before they are used. Furthermore, the final shot of Edith and François, both dead, is

foreshadowed an earlier one, of them lying down on his bed, which holds its gaze on their still bodies for slightly too long (fig. 13 a-b). This particular framing of the couple is a portentous citation of Jean-Pierre Melville's *Les Enfants terribles* (1950) which, similarly, ends with the pair in question (in this case a brother and sister) dead by suicide (fig. 13c). Mounting dread is also the result, more straightforwardly, of narrative events. Edmond's increasing jealousy, Violette's pregnancy and the worsening relationship between the dockers and their managers are a few examples of the problems which escalate and become interlinked and intractable, and point towards an explosive climax (Waldron 2015, 77).

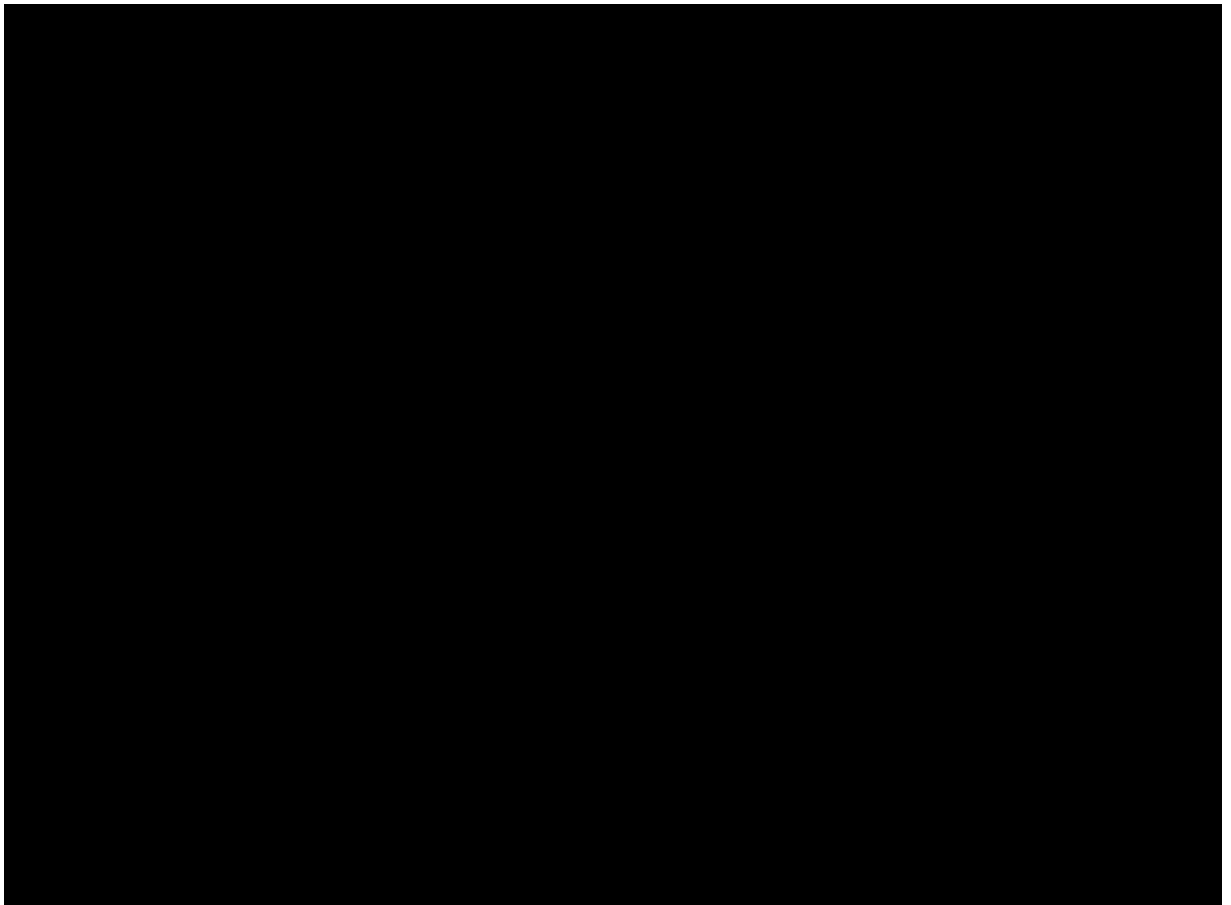


Fig. 13 a-c.

The interior scenes of *Une chambre en ville* lend themselves perfectly to the kind of mise en scène analysis auteurist critics of Hollywood melodrama would perform on domestic melodramas of the 1950s. Décor and design in melodrama, for example,

have an important function in bringing to the surface what is repressed. As Nowell-Smith argues, ‘the [melodramatic] film...somatises its own unaccommodated excess, which appears displaced in the wrong place’ (Nowell-Smith 1987, 74). Props and décor are over-invested with significance. In *Une chambre en ville*, the Langlois family’s accumulated disgrace and unhealed grief are expressed through excess in the décor and material contents of the interior spaces. This section will analyse some of the interior spaces depicted in the film. I will focus primarily on Margot Langlois’ apartment, and secondarily on Edmond’s television shop, and the apartment Violette shares with her mother. Through décor and mise en scene, these interior spaces imply different social classes: the moribund aristocracy, whose homes recall bygone eras and imply unfronted shame; the cash-hungry bourgeoisie; and the honest, authentic working class.

The moments of greatest emotional intensity in *Une chambre en ville* all take place in Margot’s living room, which has the most emotionally loaded collection of props and the busiest décor of all the rooms in the house (fig. 14a). It shares qualities with Wade’s (Robert Mitchum) study in *Home from the Hill*, the reddest and most theatrically decorated room in the house, which Edward Gallaent describes thus: ‘Its basic quality is its turgidness, the sense that it is overstuffed and dead’ (Gallaent 2009, 190). Margot’s living room is certainly ‘overstuffed’ with densely textured fabrics, patterned wallpapers, gold and bronze objects and expensive-looking trinkets. Its curtains are thick and dark red, and in these opulent surroundings they give a self-consciously theatrical air to the many scenes of passion or discord which take place in front of them (fig. 14b). The television set, an unsuitable object in a room full of items which could be from the previous century, is a reminder of Edith’s unsuitable marriage to Edmond (fig. 14c). Both Edith and Edmond are placed next to the television during

scenes in this room, and when she produces the gun with which she intends to threaten him, it appears in front of the television.

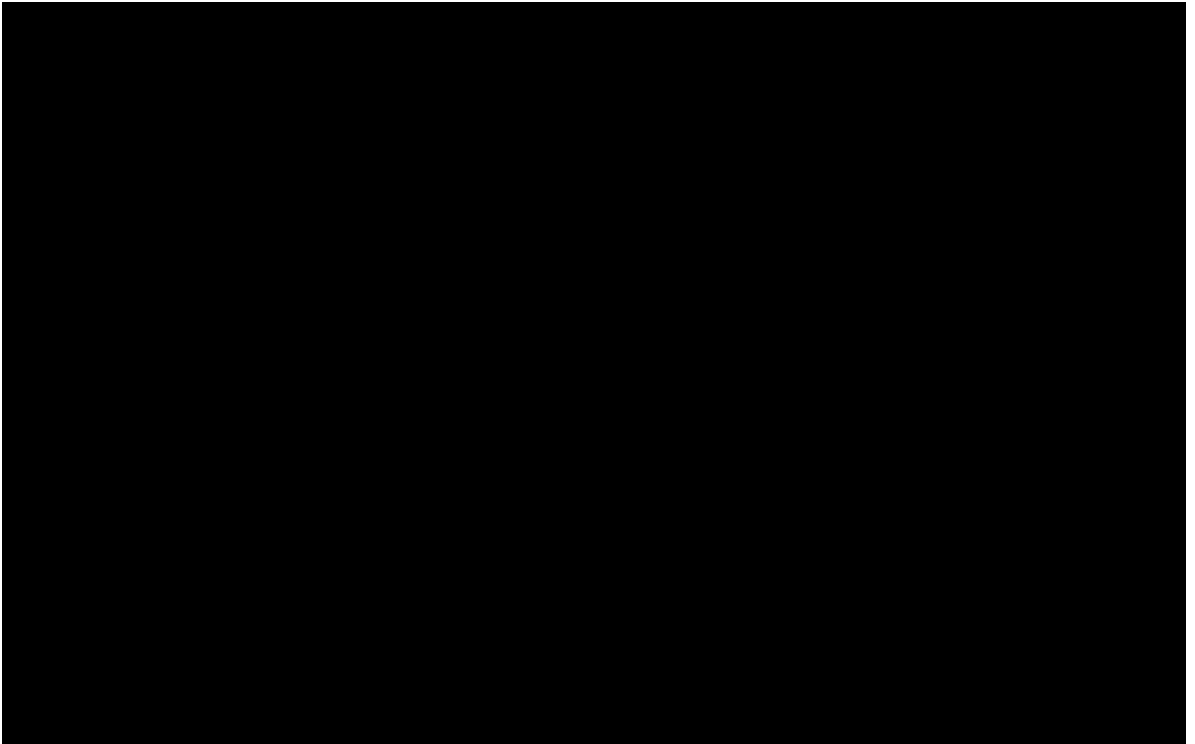


Fig. 14 a-d.

The photograph behind Margot in fig. 14a and 14d is presumably a photo of Philippe, who, according to Camille Taboulay's archival research, was to be a living character, and a pianist, in an earlier version of the screenplay (Taboulay 1996, 144). Taboulay has also discovered that Philippe was gay in previous versions of the story. He was also, variously, a fashion designer, a drug addict, and engaged to the daughter of a local industrialist who was going to 'save him from his demons'. His role was stripped down as the project approached production, until his suicide predated the film's narrative. In a manner typical of melodramas, objects associated with Philippe are over-invested with narrative and emotional significance. The piano, and the photograph on the piano, are objects highly charged with the memory of Philippe, and thus with the family's unhealed grief, and the loss of status implied by the loss of their only son, who would have been expected to carry the family name forward. When, over a sequence of

shots spread over several scenes, Margot gets drunk and falls asleep at the piano, her unhealed grief and shame bubble under the surface. And when Edmond threatens to kill himself if Edith leaves him, his face positioned over the photograph of Philippe, the presence of the photograph suggests a sequence of related violent incidents in the family, rather than a single death.

The apartment shared by Violette and her mother is a counterpoint to the stressed, bizarre space inhabited by Margot, the representative of an aristocracy nostalgic for its own past. Scenes filmed in Violette's apartment naively valorise work and a 'simple' life. It is a small, simple space: only two of its rooms are shown, and each one is visible from the other through a doorway. The openness and lightness of the space seems to affirm that there are no shameful secrets here. Rather than portraits, most of the paintings on the walls are of animals, or they are landscapes, associated with nature rather than culture. The dominant colours of this space, in contrast to the deep brown and blood red of Margot's home, are pinks and yellows, and the colours of the women's clothes, the props, and the wallpaper are in harmony.

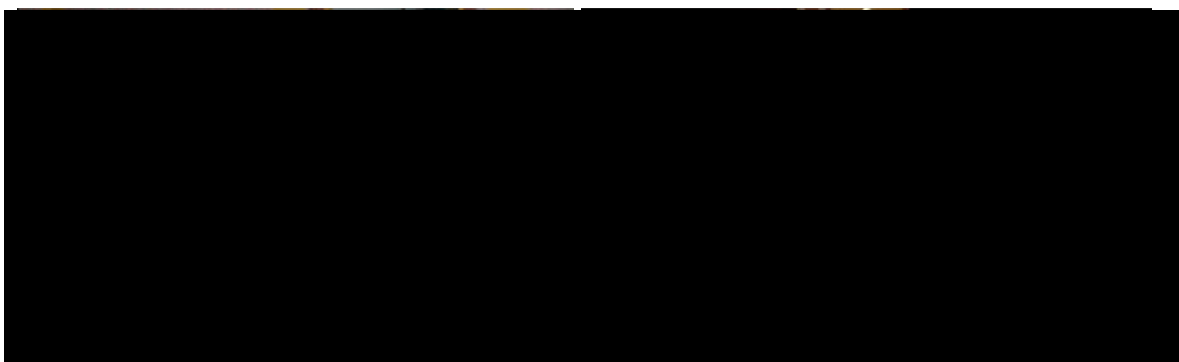


Fig. 15 a-b.

The deep focus presents simultaneous action in the two rooms. In fig. 15a, this is two different kinds of domestic work, preparing dinner and sewing; and in fig. 15b, we see Mme Pelletier's sewing in the foreground, and the two women eating dinner in the

background. The feeling of openness created by the adjoining rooms complements the caring, mutually supportive dialogue between Violette and her mother. Unencumbered by trauma and secrets, Violette develops resilience through the end of her relationship with François, indicated by forthright dialogue and a stronger singing voice. While the people around her die, Violette leaves the film with a future (implied by her pregnancy) and seems set to become the kind of resilient, unshamed single mother one sees in many other Demy films.

Scenes set at Edmond's television shop, finally, overstate the putative indignity of Edith's marriage to a bourgeois man who runs a business. Edmond and Edith's home, presumably on the upper floor of the same building, is never shown, a choice which casts their relationship as primarily a business arrangement. In the first scene in this setting, Edmond and Edith are initially separated from one another visually, by the shop's columns or by the cash register, as they exchange barbed remarks (fig. 16 a-b). Subsequent shots centre on the money Edith takes from the till. The pair, framed now in separate mid-shots, argue about the money they are holding (fig. 16 c-d). Edith then throws a bundle of cash at Edmond, who gets onto his knees to pick it up and offer it to her (fig. 16 e). After she leaves, a high-angle shot emphasises Edmond's humiliation as he kneels on the floor surrounded by the fallen notes (fig. 16 f). The importance of cash in this scene emphasises Edmond's position within the bourgeoisie, as a business owner whose livelihood depends on earning money daily, as he does not possess the trappings of inherited wealth like Margot. The scene thus underscores Edith's perceived fall from a high social position.

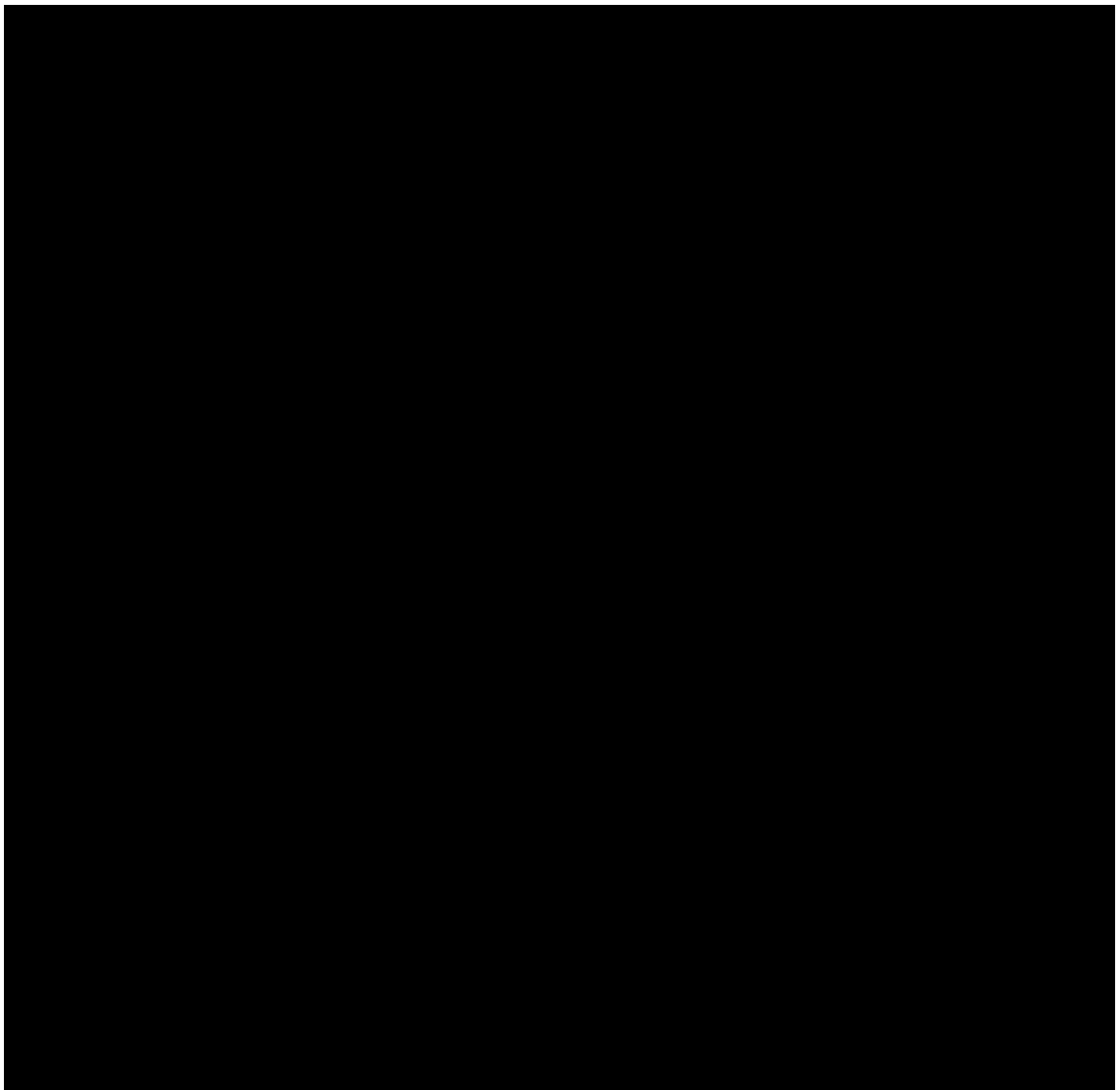


Fig. 16 a-f.

The second scene at the television shop is set at night. The shop is illuminated only by televisions, which are all playing the same eerie black-and-white footage of a bald man⁵³. Following a tense standoff between Edith and Edmond, filmed in point-of-view shots, Edmond slices his throat with a razor against a backdrop of television screens (fig. 17 a-b).

⁵³ Denis Epstein, the film's Assistant Director, is credited as 'The man on the TV'.



Fig. 17 a-b.

No narrative explanation is given for this eerie television footage. It serves partly to unnerve: it suggests a watching presence in the room, and thus gives this scene of violence a disturbing dystopian feeling. It also over-emphasises Edmond's occupation at the moment of his death. Margot jokes early in the film that Edith marrying a salesman is 'a real fairy-tale', and Edith later comments, with contempt, that TV salesmen don't go on strike. These two remarks suggest that Edmond occupies an unseemly place in the class hierarchy: he is not a handsome prince, nor an honourable working-class man. Given the presentation of Edmond and his station in life throughout the film, it appears appropriate that he should die a strange, frightening yet cartoonish death, against a backdrop of his own wares.

Lefèvre notes that some of the acting in *Une chambre en ville* is 'gestural', to an extent that recalls silent film performances in which, in the absence of spoken dialogue, actors would use exaggerated gestures and facial expressions to communicate emotion (Lefèvre 2013, 52). In her history of silent film acting, which focuses on the films D. W. Griffith made for the Biograph company, Roberta Pearson provides a thorough history of silent film acting, and its roots in French melodramatic theatre. The acting style which she calls 'histrionic' did indeed rely on a repertoire of gestures and expressions to express specific emotions, and required performers to act in a 'self-consciously theatrical fashion, ostentatiously playing a role rather than pretending to be another

person' (Pearson 1992, 21). The histrionic code was brought from French melodramatic theatre to America as the Delsarte code, formalised by François Delsarte (23). From there it was subsequently adopted in early Hollywood. Biograph had its own acting dictionary, with entries such as: “*fear*”: arm extended, palm out toward fearful object, other hand perhaps clutching the throat’ (24). Pearson asserts that style of acting does not imply an unsophisticated audience, or worse art; it was merely a convention, and realistic or ‘verisimilar’ acting, which became standard in Hollywood during the sound era, is another.

The performances in *Une chambre en ville* are a mix of histrionic and verisimilar. As Lefèvre notes, Michel Piccoli, as Edmond, is the most histrionic. Lefèvre describes moments of Piccoli’s performance thus: ‘he puts his hand over his heart, addressing his wife, whom he loves without knowing how to love her, he furrows his brow in contrition after having hurt her, affects an excessively afflicted expression as he assures her that she will regret it her whole life if she leaves him’ (Lefèvre 2013, 52). While he is clearly not following a manual of gestures, Piccoli gestures often and excessively to indicate Edmond’s emotions. To express sorrow or regret, he places his hand over his heart and bows his head; in surprise, he grasps the top of his head; he gestures outside as he tells Edith to leave. Piccoli’s use of an outmoded acting style is consonant with the character of Edmond, a pure, irrational villain, a playful throwback to melodramas populated by ‘[s]tock figures of no psychological depth’ (Pearson 1992, 8).

Other characters are more psychologically complex and morally ambivalent, and the actors playing them accordingly use different, more verisimilar performance styles. Sanda incarnates Edith with relative physical restraint—she does not gesticulate a great deal—but the vocal performance by Florence Davis is extraordinarily histrionic. Her

voice is persistently loud, strong and sharp-edged, and her singing is intermittently broken up by scoffs and yelps. Describing her married life with Edmond to her mother, Edith works herself up into a theatrical frenzy, ending on a phrase Lefèvre has transcribed as ‘c’est infernaaaaaal!’ (‘It’s hellllllll!’) (Lefèvre 2013, 54.) She does this in front of the thick red curtains in the living room, which are parted to suggest a stage, suggesting self-conscious theatricality. In contrast, the association of working-class characters with authenticity and transparency is wrought through more restrained performances by Berry as François, Stévenin as Dambiel, Guyon as Violette, and Gaylor as Mme Pelletier. These performances, alongside the interior decors, are a meaningful piece of this melodrama of social class.

Conclusion

As I have sought to demonstrate, *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and *Une chambre en ville* share an emotional intensity that does not come from realism. Despite the latter film’s thin historical veneer, it bears the influence of centuries of popular melodramatic entertainment as much as it bears the influence of Demy’s childhood in Nantes. Its affects stem from the conventions of melodrama, none of which aspire to realism: histrionic acting and stock characterisation; implausible and excessive décor and costumes; and a well-worn plot whose ending is predicted at the beginning. *Une chambre en ville*, in the manner Dyer describes, historicises the film spectator’s emotions, through a very self-conscious and open engagement with its generic predecessors.

The musical: Trois places pour le 26

After the critical and commercial failure of *Parking*, Demy decided to give up on the cinema, and dedicated himself to painting and photography. In a 1988 interview in *Cahiers*, he described coming to the conclusion: ‘I had made films, and it was wonderful, but I was drawing a line under it’ (Clech, Strauss and Toubiana 1988, 61-62). Berthomé details some film work he did in this period, which is not available in the *Intégrale Jacques Demy*: a film showcasing French technology, commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and some live action sequences in *La Table tournante* (1988), a film about the work of the animator Paul Grimault (Berthomé 2014, 385-387). Meanwhile, as Gérard Lefort notes in his review of *Trois places*, Demy’s style had been recycled into advertising, notably in a 1987 advert for perfumed toilet paper in which two men sing about toilet paper in a pastel-coloured toilet paper shop (Lefort 1988, 32)⁵⁴. This would suggest that his career as a serious filmmaker was in the past, and the style of film he had made now existed mostly in the form of commercial kitsch.

As with *Une chambre en ville*, *Trois places pour le 26* was a decades-old project which Demy was finally able to make thanks to his friendship with a star: Yves Montand, for whom an earlier version of the film had been planned in the 1970s. Montand proposed the project to Claude Berri when they were both in New York promoting *Jean de Florette* (1987). Demy was thereby not only able to see through one of his oldest projects, but was able to do so with ample money and time, for the first time in his career (Berthomé 2014, 388). The film received a largely very positive critical reception, but was not successful commercially. *France soir* reported in early

⁵⁴ “Le trèfle parfumé”, YouTube video, 0:30, posted by “schlampenfieber”. November 23rd 2006. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lohkCwZ1X0M>

December that the film had had 54,000 entries in Paris in its first week which, given that it had benefited from a sizeable publicity campaign, was disappointing (Chazal 1988). The eventual total was 295,017 entries, making it one of Demy's least successful films (Soyer 2013).

Trois places begins with Yves Montand arriving in his hometown of Marseille on a train. He is in town with two purposes: to rehearse and perform in a musical production about his own life, entitled 'Montand Remembers'; and to look for a former partner, Mylène Le Goff (Françoise Fabian), whom he has never forgotten. Mylène, a former sex worker, is now Mylène Lambert, having married a rich man who is now in prison for fraud. She has a 21 year-old daughter, Marion (Mathilda May), who works at a perfume shop but dreams of making it on stage. The audience will soon discover that Marion is Montand's biological daughter. Marion sneaks into Montand's dressing room to ask for three tickets to the show, for herself and her friends, and impresses Montand with her singing. When the show's female lead has to leave because she is pregnant, Marion steps in. She is now, unknowingly, playing the role of her own mother. After the show's triumphant first performance, what seems inevitable and yet impossible happens: Marion and Montand have sex. In the morning she discovers that she has just slept with her father. What could have been an extremely dark moment transitions with strange ease into a happy ending, as Marion realises that her parents are still in love, and convinces her mother to come on tour with the show, thereby reuniting the family.

Reviews of *Trois places* were as nostalgic as the film itself, for both the Hollywood past and Demy's past. Taking their cue from the film, they place Demy in a lineage of great musical theatre directors. Michel Perez in *Le Nouvel observateur* described the music as 'real music, the kind of music that Berlin, Kern or Gershwin used to compose for Fred and Ginger, that made Kelly sing in the rain...' (Perez 1988).

There was also consensus in the popular press that this film recalled ‘the Jacques Demy of the golden age, the age of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, of *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*...the Demy of smiling emotion, of cheerful colour, of happiness’ (Coppermann 1988). Demy was no longer a perennial failure, as he had been cast upon the release of *Parking*, but a ‘magician’, ‘our national Minnelli’ (Boujut 1988). There is a hint in the film that Demy might agree with this assessment: as Marion and Toni are having lunch, a cutaway shows a nearby boat named ‘Vincente II’.

As Lefort notes, two separate mythologies are shored up in *Trois places*: Demy’s, and Montand’s (Lefort 1988, 33). Most reviews framed the film as a Montand film, rather than a Demy film, and their descriptions of the actor demonstrate how the film engages with various aspects of Montand’s star image, as I will discuss in a section below. The film’s very explicit incest narrative was entirely left out of many synopses in reviews in newspapers, presumably because it did not align with their account of the film as a triumph of wholesome, old-fashioned cinema. The review in *Figaro magazine* by Jacques Nerson made a feature of the incest narrative: it was entitled, ‘*Trois places pour le 26? A ticket to incest*’, and written in a scandalised tone (Nerson 1988, 102). Nerson suggested it was typical of Yves Montand to take on such a headline-grabbing role, and that the film would provoke a scandal; it did not. In various interviews, both Montand and Demy explained that what takes place in *Trois places* is in fact quite innocent because the characters do not know that they are related (Nerson 1988, 103; Pantel 1988; de Gasperi 1988; Tranchant 1988). The association in *Trois places* of the ageing Montand with girls and much younger women correlates with his public persona, but it also reflects a tradition in both Hollywood musicals and French films of pairing father figures with very young women, as I will discuss below.

Trois places may be the best film through which to explore Demy's relationship to the Hollywood musical. This is not only because of its adherence to the conventions of the backstage musical, but because, like most backstage musicals made from the late 1940s onwards, it has a complex relationship with the genre's past. *Trois places*, made at the end of Demy's life, looks obliquely back over his work and life, through a partially invented story about Yves Montand. *Trois places* has a self-reflexivity and self-citatoriality that is typical of the Hollywood musical, but through its representation of Montand's life, it is also bound up with questions of melancholy and mortality.

Demy remembers Montand

Reviews of *Trois places* focused on Montand, rather than Demy. The titles of most of these pieces used Montand's name, variations on the name of the fictional show in the film ('*Montand de son temps*'/'Montand Remembers'), or a reference to one of his famous songs such as 'Les Feuilles mortes' (Coppermann 1988). Montand also gave many more interviews than Demy did, and was therefore better placed to frame the film as the story of his life. Many critics drew parallels between the version of Montand on screen in the film, and his public image. In interviews, Montand emphasised his roots as a 'little working-class boy' in Marseille, the child of Italian immigrants, who left school at 11 years old to start work in a pasta factory (Andreu 1988). Various reviews pointed out that he was about to become a father for the first time, which chimed with the film's odd focus on fatherhood (Pantel 1988; Quentin 1988; Magny 1988, 9). Gilles le Morvan notes that in both *Trois places pour le 26*, and in *Jean de Florette* (Claude Berri, 1987), Montand's characters are 'implicated in paternity scandals', as Montand was from the

late 1980s, when a woman claimed that he was the biological father of her son (le Morvan 1988).

There are a great many biographies and commemorative books about Montand in French, all written in admiring tone. Most of these texts construct a very similar narrative about his life, and ascribe to him the same set of qualities. He is unrelentingly cast as an authentic man of the people. A 1982 biography, in its conclusion, states that ‘To love Montand is above all to admire an artist who comes from the common people, who has always stayed close to the people and has proved to them that, with hard work and the will to succeed, anyone can “move up”’ (Monserrat 1982, 407.) The same book states that Montand ‘expresses in his songs what he feels in life’, thereby suggesting that his songs are authentic expressions of his own subjectivity, even though he was a performer rather than a writer (383.)

The narrative of ‘Montand Remembers’ is consonant with this aspect of Montand’s persona. He is presented as an authentic, working-class homegrown talent, not comfortable in the slick, shiny American movie scene ‘Montand Remembers’ briefly depicts. The Marseille set of ‘Montand Remembers’ features larger-than-life landmarks such as a transporter bridge, which place Montand’s childhood within an industrial landscape. The show reconstructs moments from his youth as a music-hall singer in Marseille and Paris, in the days when according to Guy Austin he was pejoratively nicknamed ‘the singing prole’ (*le prolo chantant*) (Austin 2003, 19). He is shown to have an affinity with *chanson française* and music hall, rather than any American musical theatre tradition. For these scenes, Montand affects an Italian accent and an excitable demeanour. When he is offered the chance to perform, he says he will sing ‘La vie qui va’, by the singer-songwriter Charles Trenet. The scenes are quietly accompanied by an accordion.

Trois places pour le 26 interweaves fact, story and performance in order to present the Montand character as authentic. In particular, the transitions between diegetic and non-diegetic music, and between the registers of performance and non-performance, suggest that Montand's performances come from the heart. In the first scene at the theatre, Montand starts to tell Toni (Patrick Fierry) the story of how he met Mylène. He plugs in a microphone and begins to speak into it. Next he starts to sing 'Lorsqu'on revient après vingt ans', under the pretext of doing a soundcheck. From a very wide shot, comprising the front few rows of seats and the entire stage, the camera cranes forwards over the seats until it frames Montand in the centre of a much tighter shot. During this transition, non-diegetic music starts to accompany Montand's singing. An informal conversation thus becomes a musical performance, with the appropriate framing and music. This sequence also suggests that Montand's music is rooted in his experience, as the song, about coming back to your hometown after a long absence, is thematically related to the story he was telling. That story itself is fictional, but informed by Montand's life and his public image. Through this interplay of fiction and biography, *Trois places* suggests that its artifice is grounded in reality, and invests Montand with authenticity.

Montand's relationships with women are also emphasised in all the written versions of his life story, as they are in the story told in *Trois places*. Most biographies focus on three women in particular: Edith Piaf, with whom he had a romantic and professional relationship in the 1940s; Marilyn Monroe, with whom he had a brief affair while filming *Let's Make Love* (George Cukor, 1960); and Simone Signoret, his wife from 1951 until her death in 1985. The biographies construct the image of a man who was irresistible to younger women, and Montand helped to create this narrative by being

extremely open in interviews about having affairs with other women, in a tone which suggested complicity with his interviewer and male readers:

There is no use fooling ourselves, we like...younger women. As a woman grows old, she learns—sometimes—to close her eyes. It's important. It's enough for her that she is loved, profoundly loved, for her to have the strength to understand that men are men, that they will always love pretty girls and even to be attracted to them. There's nothing we can do to change that (Cannavo and Quinquéré 1981, 163.)

Montand said Signoret was 'smart enough to never ask' about his affairs. 'A real woman!', he concluded. Before Signoret's death in 1985, Montand started an affair with Carole Amiel, whom he had met in the late 1970s when she was 14. She announced her pregnancy while Montand was filming *Trois places*, and while she was pregnant Montand told various interviewers that he did not want the baby, because he was too old (Pascuito 1992, 191).

I include these biographical details from the literature because the way in which Montand's romantic relationships have been written about reveals much about the culture in which *Trois places* was made, and the myths it valorises. It feels, in many ways, like Demy's straightest film, as if its sexual politics had been moulded to mimic the discourse around Montand. *Trois places* is unusual among Demy films because it centres so squarely on a heterosexual man. The film includes various moments of uncomfortable male homosociality, which recall the interview quoted above in that they involve two men forging complicity with one other by denigrating absent women. In one, Montand literally offers Marion, who has just left the room, to Toni (Patrick Fierry), the play's director, with the words 'Be my guest'. In another, Montand and his

childhood friend Marius (Pierre Maguelon) laugh about the idea that Mylène has been raising Montand's daughter alone without telling him. Finally, before the start of the opening performance, two men backstage discuss how 'exquisite' the dancers are, and an eyeline match shows the audience their gaze on their near-naked bodies (fig. 18 a-b).

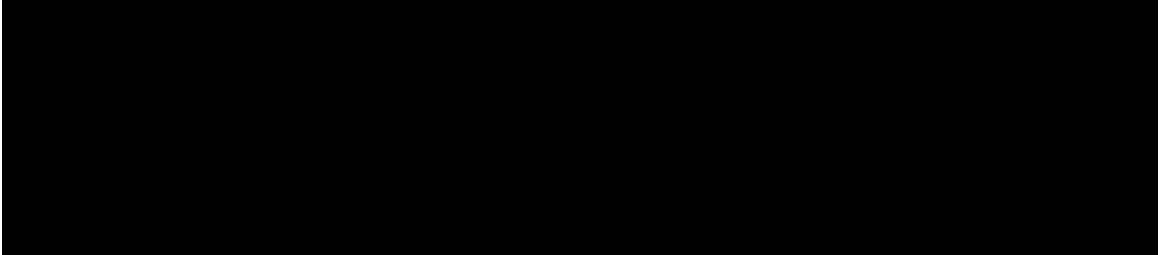


Fig. 18 a-b.

Female dancers are not filmed in this way, with an explicitly sexualised male gaze, in any of Demy's other films. Furthermore, previous Demy films are more likely to depict homosociality and intimacy between women than men.

Trois places combines sexual and gender politics influenced by Montand's persona as a womaniser with father-daughter incest. It does this most starkly in Montand and Marion's queasy 'morning after' scene. The two actors' performances evoke a father-daughter relationship, in the physical setting and narrative context of a sexual relationship. The hotel room is arranged to evoke sex: there is an empty bottle of champagne on the table, there are clothes on the floor, and the bed in which Marion is asleep naked is suggestively messy. Their behaviour, however, is that of a father and daughter, or a grandfather and granddaughter. Marion plays, pulling the covers over her head to show that she does not want to see her photo in the paper; she hangs around his neck, and kisses him on the nose. Montand intones sagely about showbusiness, and his past. He is dressed respectably in a robe, whereas Marion is naked, and the scene cuts to a wider shot as she gets out of bed to fully capture her naked body.

Critical reactions to the film's incest narrative have varied enormously. Diane Henneton (2012) argues that incest is the subtext of every Hollywood movie which pairs a man in his fifties, such as Fred Astaire, with a woman in her twenties, such as Audrey Hepburn. The Marion-Montand couple, she argues, therefore appears to be 'in the purest tradition of the genre' (Henneton 2012, 235). This is a ruse, however, as the real pairing is between Montand and Mylène, who form a fairly standard couple. Henneton argues that Demy's stance, therefore, is critical of the Hollywood standard, as he highlights the incestuous subtext of these pairings, and then ultimately matches Montand with a woman closer to his age.

The longstanding tradition of depictions of father-daughter incest in French films seriously complicates Henneton's argument that Demy's representation of incest is critical. Ginette Vincendeau, for example, has explored the prevalence of father-daughter couples French films of the 1930s. She writes that the scenario typically 'revolves around the seduction of the 'father' by the 'daughter'' (Vincendeau 1988, 72). As the inverted commas indicate, it does not always concern a biological father and daughter, but rather two people who believe they are father and daughter, or occupy those roles in each other's lives. Although films depicting father-daughter incest became much less common after the 1930s, Vincendeau cites two examples from the 1980s, which were especially explicit: Doillon's *La Puritaine* (1986), and Gainsbourg's *Charlotte for ever* (1986) (80.)

Vincendeau gives various reasons French films of the 1930s might feature relationships between old men and young women. France had an ageing population, and the young bourgeois women were generally expected to marry older men. In terms of box office draws, furthermore, there were more middle-aged male stars than female stars of any age in the 1930s (Vincendeau 1988, 73-74). We can, more speculatively,

suggest reasons why Montand might be paired with this 21 year-old daughter in *Trois places*. The film is premised on the idea that Montand is still very attractive to young women, which is itself suggested by Montand's very high-profile contemporary relationship with a very young woman. Marion seems impressed by his life experience, his access to the world of showbusiness, and his charisma, but the fact that he is desirable goes unquestioned. We can surmise, furthermore, that Marion is supposed to be attractive for her youth and beauty, and her willingness to drop everything to save Montand's show and learn the profession from Montand. In a narrative universe in which age, experience and power are attractive in men, and youth, inexperience and willingness to be instructed are attractive in women, men and women already occupy the structural positions of father and daughter. Demy makes this very clear in making the two characters biologically related. It is my opinion that this choice is not critical of any existing orthodoxy, but rather an expression of it.

Trois places has one number, 'L'Esprit frappeur', which escapes the film's dominant visual and political regime. This number, set in a shipyard and featuring twenty male dancers representing dock workers, awkwardly juxtaposes Montand's old-fashioned white patriarch act with a spectacle of masculinity which is unmistakably coded as homoerotic. Montand, dressed contrastingly in a suit (with the jacket off, perhaps as a concession to the casual environment), is continually marginalised in the frame by being off-centre or in the midground (fig. 19a). Various moments of camera movement reveal that he is not the intended object of the camera's gaze, for example when he walks slowly out of shot and the camera stays where it is, pointed at the dancers. Later, an instrumental allows Demy to film only the dancers, without Montand, for twenty seconds (fig. 19b).

The dance, with its confident spins, thrusts and jumps, makes a spectacle of male strength; it may be intended to parallel the physicality of the men's work, but the dance is clearly about leisure rather than work. It recalls 'Ain't There Anyone Here For Love', the number in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks, 1953) in which Jane Russell struts through a gymnasium filled with a near-naked Olympic squad practicing wrestling and gymnastics. In the lyrics, she wonders why none of these men are interested in her romantically. Both Russell and Montand in their respective numbers are clueless as to the real meaning of their surroundings. 'L'Esprit frappeur' suggests that the male-dominated working culture Montand is shown to have come from has given life to various forms of cultural expression. The lyrics Montand sings construct a specific kind of straight working-class masculinity, forged through physical work; the number's choreography, costumes and mise en scene suggest, instead, gay male homosociality within the same culture.

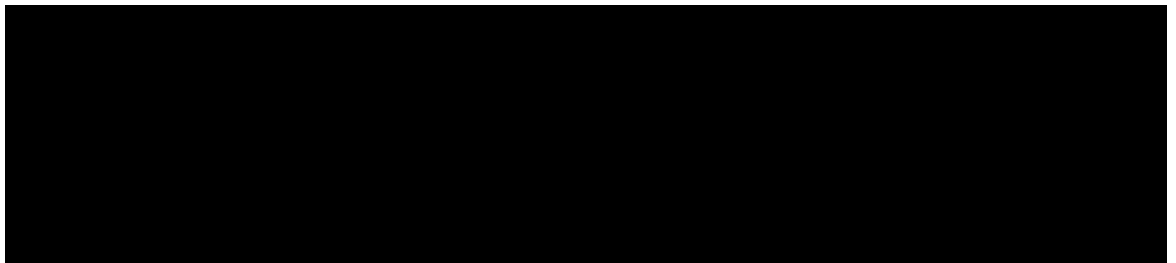


Fig. 19 a-b.

'Mass art as folk art'

Darren Waldron and Diane Henneton discuss *Trois places* as a backstage musical: a musical which concerns the putting on of a show, and celebrates musical entertainment. The unacknowledged antecedent to Waldron and Henneton's writing on the genre is Jane Feuer's *The Hollywood Musical*. Feuer emphasises that musical films

are a form of entertainment created by professionals, made and sold by various entities for a profit, and consumed by paying audiences. This gap between the professional entertainer and the paying consumer, and the further alienation implied by mass reproduction, is the ‘original sin’ of the Hollywood musical, according to Feuer (3). The musical has various strategies for masking this ‘original sin’ and insisting that musicals are ‘folk art, produced and consumed by the same integrated community (3).’ *Trois places* uses many of these same strategies in order to frame Montand’s show, and the film itself, as a kind of spontaneous, communitarian folk art. In addition to these similarities, however, there are a number of differences, which stem from the film’s efforts to memorialise Demy and Montand.

Marion’s first number, ‘Au concert’, and the number performed in the perfume shop, ‘La Parfumerie’, are what Feuer calls ‘prop dances’: dance numbers which suggest spontaneity by incorporating props from the set. In the first, Marion uses props and furniture, and features of the room itself such as columns, to construct a dance which has an ‘aura of spontaneity’ (4) (fig. 20 a-b). Similarly, in ‘La Parfumerie’, Marion, Alice (Katy Varda) and Nicole (Marie-Dominique Chayze) use dusters and bottles as make-believe microphones, and the counters as platforms, to make a dance number that appears casual, easy and fun. These numbers thereby ‘den[y] work is involved in producing dance routines’, and suggest that musicals like *Trois places* are easily made and pre-capitalist (10).

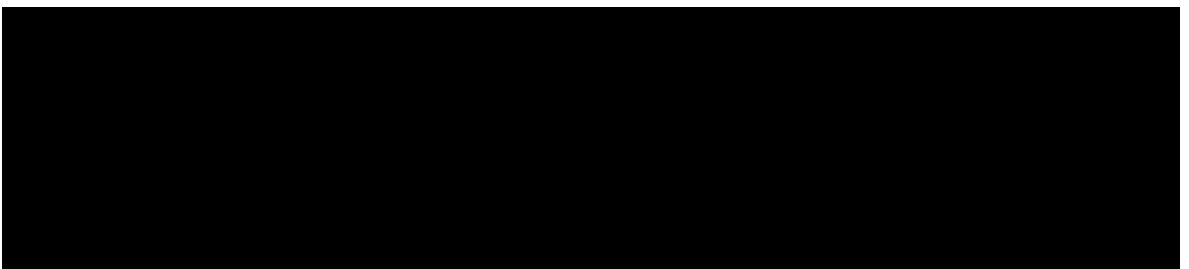


Fig. 20 a-b.

Trois places also features various ‘bogus rehearsal scenes’, in which numbers such as ‘Ciné qui chante’ are presented as rehearsals, when they are in fact perfect and included for entertainment. ‘Ciné qui chante’ is preceded by a backstage scene in which a harassed stage manager, followed by a tracking shot, moves through various groups of people giving instructions and solving problems. This sequence suggests, as economically as possible, that there is organisation and planning involved in putting on a show. The number ‘Ciné qui chante’, however, is run through flawlessly from start to finish, without the tedium of stopping and starting, repetition, forgotten lines, or intervention by the director. Thus, ‘we get all the polish of a finished performance together with the casual quality of the rehearsal environment’, a means of denying, again, that there is a great deal of professional labour involved in the musical (Feuer 1993, 11).

The narrative of the amateur, like Marion, being ‘discovered’ and turning their love of song and dance into a career, is a classic feature of backstage musicals. It suggests that stars work for love, not money, and that they come from our world and are just like us. ‘Amateur entertainers...can’t exploit us’, Feuer explains, ‘because they *are* us’ (Feuer 1993, 14). In *Trois places*, however, the story of Marion’s discovery by Montand and ascendancy to professional stardom is secondary to a narrative about Montand. The viewer may ultimately remain unconvinced of Marion’s talents: Mathilda May was a classically trained dancer but a weak singer, a fact which Demy makes no attempt to hide. Furthermore, the discovery of her talents by Montand does not take place through a spectacular display of those talents, as it does in other backstage musicals. In films such as *ZouZou* (Marc Allégret, 1934) and *A Star is Born* (George Cukor, 1954), the talent of the woman destined for stardom is emphasised through light and the placement of the important person on screen. As Esther (Judy Garland) sings

‘The Man that Got Away’ with her band in downtime, a warm glow seems to emanate from her, while the other band members sit in relative darkness (fig. 21a). Zouzou (Josephine Baker) is dancing backstage in a spotlight, when the curtain is raised without her noticing and she is spotted by the people in charge of the show (fig. 21b). By extreme contrast, Marion’s ‘discovery’ by Montand takes place over two rather unspectacular scenes: one in which she sings for Montand, a song which turns into a duet after she forgets the words, after which he declares that she is ‘not bad’; and a second scene, in which three men discuss her suitability for the newly available part, while she stands quietly at the edges of the frame (fig. 21 c-d). *Trois places* does not spectacularise Marion’s discovery. The film is, ultimately, not about a talented young woman finding stardom, but about an older man known for his musicals, looking back on his life and career.

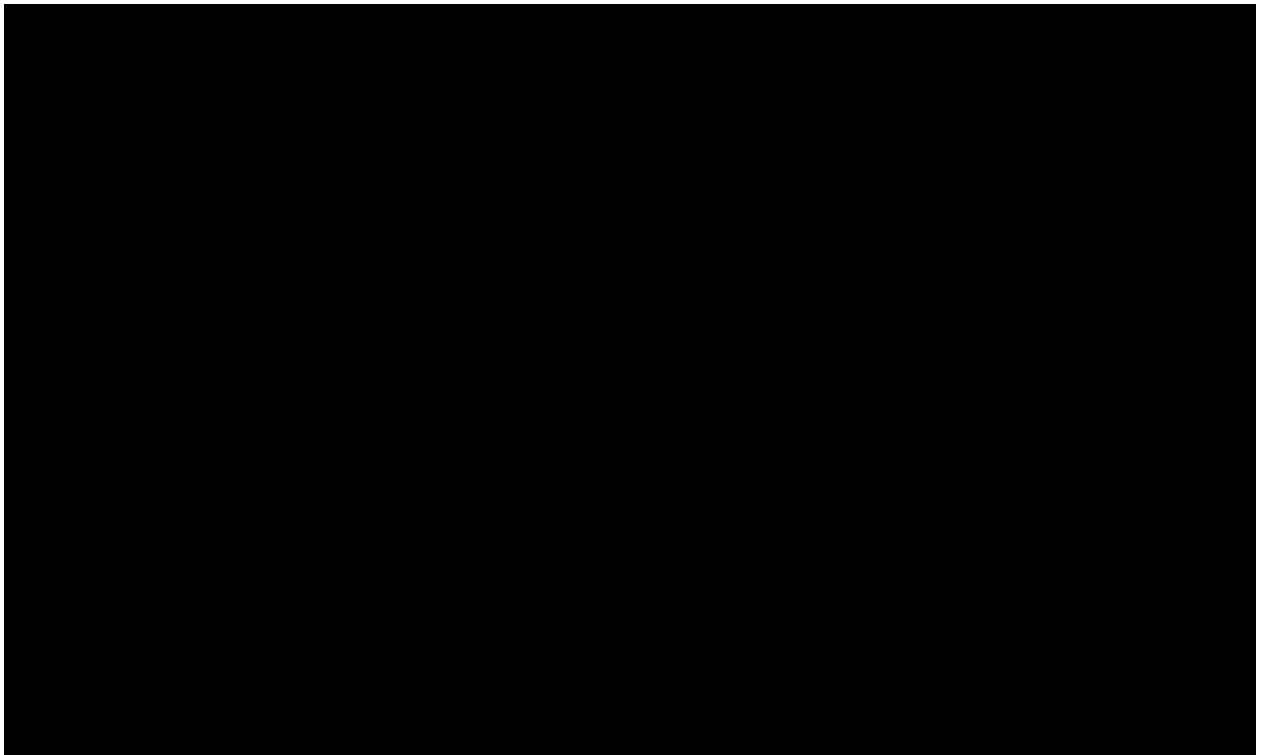


Fig. 21 a-d.

Darren Waldron’s reading of the film poses the question: is the man looking back on his career Yves Montand, or Jacques Demy? He argues persuasively that *Trois*

places ‘affirms [Demy’s] virtues as a director over Montand’s virtues as a performer (Waldron 2015, 151). His overall argument is that the film appears to do one thing, while doing another. It proposes to tell two intertwined stories about Montand: the stage show represents his youth and rise to fame, while the main (fictional) narrative draws on the viewer’s ‘present perception of his biography’ (152). There is some sleight of hand involved, however: it puts this story about Montand to the service of ‘[e]mbedding the Demy myth’.

The song ‘Ciné qui chante’ is an example of the sort of sleight of hand Waldron describes. It is what Feuer calls an ‘Ode to Entertainment’: a song with a lyric ‘telling us there’s no business like show business’, which typically uses direct address (Feuer 1993, 37). ‘Ciné qui chante’ cites *Top Hat* (1935) and *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, and in a vaguer sense celebrates a musical past characterised by men in tailcoats, platinum blonde women in long gowns, and tap dancing. This number sits somewhat awkwardly in a show about Montand’s life and career, however, because Montand only actually starred in only two Hollywood musicals, both of which were made after the golden age evoked in ‘Ciné qui chante’: *Let’s Make Love*, and *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (Vincente Minnelli, 1970). He was probably better known in France as a singer, media personality and dramatic actor than as a song-and-dance man. Reviews of *Trois places* were much more likely to mention one of Montand’s popular French songs, or his highly publicised but brief affair with Marilyn Monroe, then the film *Let’s Make Love* itself. The tribute that ‘Ciné qui chante’, and the film more broadly, pay is thus not to Montand’s career or his own influences, but to Demy’s career, his influences, and the genre he is most associated with. The film affirms, despite all the evidence, that the sorts of films Demy loved and made are enduringly appealing.

Mourning and melancholy for musicals

Trois Places, a fond retrospective of the early life and career of Yves Montand which doubles as a retrospective of the early life and career of Jacques Demy, implies in its project that both men were close to the end of their lives. Demy was diagnosed with HIV before he started filming *Trois places*, and he was hospitalised twice during the shoot (Père 2010, 271). Montand appeared to be starting a new phase of his life, as his partner announced her pregnancy while he was filming *Trois places*; he, however, died only three years later. The film has fleeting moments of real sadness and introspection. In these moments, Montand stands still and the camera lingers for a few seconds on his sad face, as he looks out of the bar door at his disappearing lost love (fig. 22a), at his young double, José (22b), or down into a vast industrial pit at the docks where he once worked (22 c-d). When asked to sign a book about himself, a shot is held for a few seconds on a page featuring a photograph of Montand and Simone Signoret. In each of these moments, a few seconds is dedicated to an expression of the things the character has lost to age and death, and what waits for him in the near future.

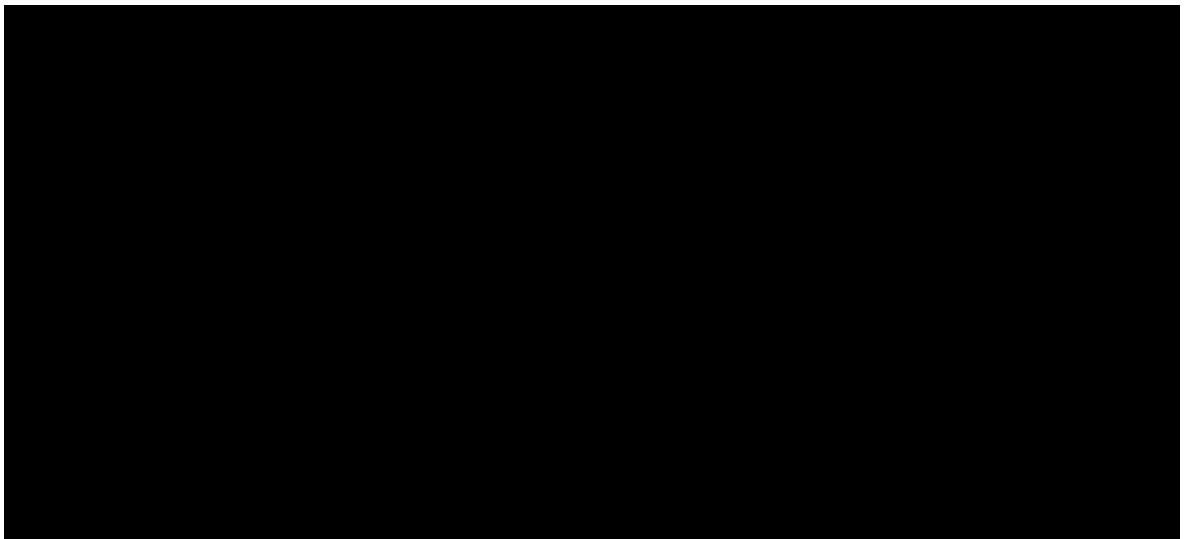


Fig. 22 a-d.

These are short moments of sadness in what is by and large an extremely or even excessively cheerful film. This section will argue that in its cheerfulness, *Trois places* is melancholy. I am invoking here Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholy. Freud casts mourning as a healthy response to the loss of a loved person or object, which entails an acknowledgement of what has been lost. Melancholia, by contrast, is the pathological reaction of a person who does not acknowledge the loss. The melancholic, Sara Ahmed explains, is 'the one who 'holds onto' an object that has been lost, who does not let go' (Ahmed 2010, 138-139). Like Ahmed, I am not interested in mourning and melancholy as the two sides of a medical-psychiatric binary, but rather as theoretical tools: ways of describing an attitude towards loss.

The films Varda made about Demy after his death are sometimes described as works of mourning, because they acknowledge and attempt to comprehend his absence, and look over his films as a completed body of work (Danks 2014; Waldron 2015, 156). *Trois places*, which Demy may have known would be his final film, is clearly a work of melancholy, rather than mourning. The brief moments of sadness highlighted above represent pieces of a tiny counter-narrative to do with ageing and loss, in a film whose main narrative overwhelmingly refuses to acknowledge change, loss and the passing of time, and remains attached to a culture which no longer exists. I will explore how *Trois places* puts the conventions of the Hollywood musical in the service of this melancholy.

Jane Feuer's remarks on late- and post-studio era musicals, and their relationship to the genre's past, are particularly pertinent to analyses of *Trois places*. Feuer describes how backstage musicals of the late studio era such as *The Barkleys of Broadway* (Charles Walters, 1949), *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen, 1952) and *The Band Wagon* self-consciously recycle or even parody elements of earlier musicals (Feuer 1993, 89). With this degree of self-reflexivity, these films may appear to look critically

on the film industry, or draw attention to their status as entertainment. They do this, however, only to ultimately reaffirm the magic of musical entertainment, and to celebrate ‘the triumph of couple and show’: the simultaneous coming together of a hit show and a new heterosexual couple. Thus, ‘the synthesis of past and present entertainment forms cancels the distinction between old and new forms of entertainment, so that musical shows appear simultaneously revolutionary and traditional’ (94). Feuer names this dynamic ‘conservative reflexivity’. Late- and post-studio era musicals appear to innovate with techniques which in other films would be read as postmodern. ‘In another sense’, however, ‘the musical does not change at all’, as it always reaffirms its own value (92).

Trois places pour le 26 is highly citational: a synthesis and celebration of Demy’s musicals, classical musicals such as *The Band Wagon*, and extrafilmic materials such as contemporary press coverage of Montand’s relationships. It contains unmistakable allusions to Demy’s most famous work, which Darren Waldron lists comprehensively (Waldron 2015, 152). It also places Demy’s work side-by-side with Hollywood musicals, for example by consecutively citing lines of music from *Top Hat*, *Singin’ in the Rain*, *Some Like it Hot* and *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* in ‘Ciné qui chante’⁵⁵. As such, it appears to fit Feuer’s description of a post-studio era musical, which recycles elements of previous musicals, self-reflexively asserts its status as a musical, and thereby ‘appears simultaneously revolutionary and traditional’. While the late studio-era musical asserts that people still love musicals in a changing world,

⁵⁵ *Some Like It Hot* is not usually considered a musical. Demy probably chose to cite ‘I Wanna Be Loved By You’ because it is a song strongly associated with Marilyn Monroe, and he wanted to allude to Montand’s affair with Monroe, rather than the film itself.

however, *Trois places* insists that the world has not changed. What Feuer names ‘conservative’ in backstage musicals, I would name ‘melancholy’ in *Trois places*.

‘Montand Remembers’ has an earnest and humourless relationship to the cultural past. It is customary for Hollywood backstage musicals of the late- or post-studio eras to find humour in dated genres and forms of technology in the show-within-a-show, even if they then go on to reassert that Hollywood musicals are a great and timeless form of entertainment. *Singin’ in the Rain* and *A Star is Born* are excellent examples. The films within these films – respectively ‘The Dancing Cavalier’ and Esther’s (Judy Garland) untitled first film, of which we see the ‘Born in a Trunk’ number – are self-consciously or even humorously dated. The films anticipate big laughs from depictions of clumsy early sound technologies, or outmoded forms of entertainment like vaudeville. By contrast, *Trois places* never acknowledges that musical revues like ‘Montand Remembers’ have had their day. Marion, Alice and Nicole, three women in their early twenties, sing an entire song about wanting to get tickets to this musical theatre production about the life of a man who rose to fame in their grandparents’ generation. Demy cannot poke fun at ‘Montand Remembers’, as to do so would undermine *Trois places pour le 26*, which is a very similar project.

In terms of costumes, sets, and iconography, there are also notably few differences between the onstage world of ‘Montand Remembers’, set some time between the early 1940s and late 1950s, and the offstage world, set in 1988. Both worlds are populated with sailors and women in brightly coloured costumes dancing in the streets; women coded visually as sex workers leaning against doors and lampposts; features of an industrial landscape such as docks and bridges (fig. 23 a-b). Similar narratives also play out in both worlds, as Montand pursues Maria/Mylène. The lived environment of *Trois places* implies a bygone era. The independently owned bookshop,

perfume shop and bar which feature in the film are all locations which could equally have existed in *Lola*. Indeed, as Waldron points out, the scene in the bookshop closely resembles that in which Roland Cassard meets Cécile and Mme Desnoyers in *Lola* (Waldron 2015, 152-3). The film's locations suggest a pre-globalised city in an earlier stage of capitalism. This is more than nostalgia: *Trois places* does not merely long for the past, or try to recreate the past in the present; it largely denies the difference between the past and the present.

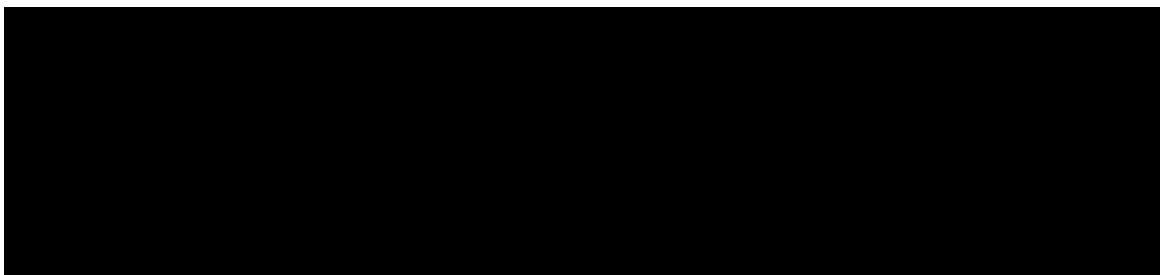


Fig. 23 a-b.

The film's opening, as various critics have noted, is a clear citation of *The Band Wagon* (1954), which opens with song-and-dance man Tony Hunter (Fred Astaire) arriving in New York on a train. In *Trois places*, the direction and music of the opening scene strain to suggest a frenzy of people desperate to see Yves Montand. Several rapidly moving tracking shots follow the crowd of journalists and photographers who have come to cover Montand's return to Marseille. Michel Legrand's up-tempo synth music starts as the train doors slide open to reveal Montand and Betty (Catriona McColl) framed in the train door, and reverse shots show their point of view on the jostling crowd (fig. 24a). In the film's first number, journalists sing and dance as they take it in turns to question Montand. Camera movement, music, choreography, and the sheer number of people on screen, combine to make Montand's welcome to Marseille warm and energetic. The parallel with *The Band Wagon* is instructive. Hunter, on arriving in New York, expects that the assembled crowd of photographers and

journalists have come to report on his arrival. It transpires, however, that they are there for Ava Gardner, who was on the same train (fig. 24b). Hunter, and by analogy Astaire and his craft, have become old news. What was a moment of self-depreciating humour, and a comment on how much popular tastes have changed, in *The Band Wagon* is a moment of guileless exuberance and self-congratulation in *Trois places*. As Sergi Sánchez notes, *Trois places* differs from *The Band Wagon* because it “exists in a parallel universe that is very similar to our world but in which there is no place for the notion of decline” (Sanchez 2011, 162).

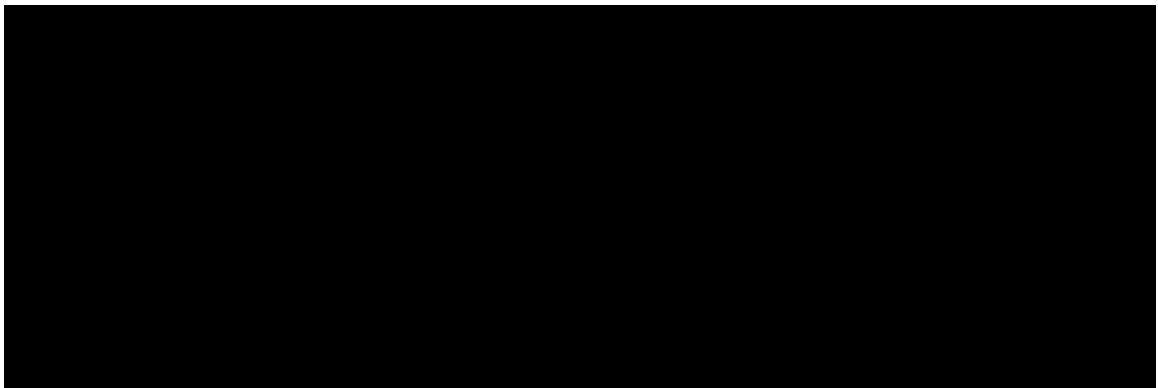


Fig. 24 a-b.

This over-insistence on the interest in Montand, and his musical spectacular, in the (young) media and public is an aspect of the film’s melancholy. It is part of a sustained attempt to deny what was made clear by the film’s box office statistics: that musicals, and ageing purveyors of musicals, were not a huge draw for contemporary audiences. Demy’s career did not really coincide with Hollywood’s studio era, but in *Trois places* he recycles elements of his own films and Hollywood musicals together in such a way as to suggest simultaneity and mutual influence. This is a universe in which musical theatre never became old-fashioned or unmarketable; in which a man with Demy’s qualities can put on a musical spectacular telling the story of his life with remarkable ease, make money, and delight a multi-generational audience. It is a

universe in which Demy's life's work is enduringly relevant and beloved. As such, it is an effort to deny change and loss.

Conclusion

Demy's use of the conventions of Hollywood genres is earnest and loving, and it encourages an emotional connection to the cinematic past. The tearjerking emotional excess of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, the mounting sense of dread in *Une chambre en ville*, the smiling denial of cultural change in *Trois places pour le 26*, are achieved through pastiche, and foster an awareness of the spectator's place in a history of emotional film spectatorship. Since Demy's death, queer French filmmakers such as Ozon and Ducastel and Martineau have come to pastiche his musicals, in order to situate their own films in an aesthetic and emotional lineage with his.

Trois places pour le 26 was the last film Demy would direct, but his last project is *Jacquot de Nantes* (1990), which Varda directed based on memoirs written by Demy. This film is more sincere and more moving because, rather than denying the passage of time, it acknowledges and documents the vulnerability of Demy's ageing body, and openly gazes back over his youth. This is the only collaboration between Demy and Varda, and it represents a bridge between the melancholy of *Trois places* and the mourning represented by Varda's later work, made after Demy's death.

Conclusion

My analysis of the reception of Jacques Demy's films has shown that the critical culture into which they were released—overwhelmingly male, straight, and elite—did not, by and large, appreciate their contradictions. These films challenge discrete categories and binary oppositions, and muddle the boundary between *auteur* film and popular genre film. They draw on queer- and feminine-identified film genres and traditions loathed by film critics, in particular the melodrama; yet, they were praised for their artistry and formal experimentation. Film magazines aimed at a popular audience were able to pitch films like *La Baie des Anges* and *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* as desperately romantic, even though their presentation of heterosexual romantic love is, by and large, sad. These complexities troubled film critics: for thirty years a homogeneous critical establishment debated the acceptability of a form of cinema which had an auteurist pedigree, and yet openly addressed a queer and female audience.

The queer audience of Demy's films took them to heart because they evoked queer experience and queer emotion, even as most focused primarily on heterosexual relationships. Through a knowing engagement with Hollywood genre films, Demy's films present heterosexual romance as part of a set of cinematic conventions: picturesque and over-represented. The films often have a camp register, through a combination of intense emotion and hyper-stylisation which is typical of gay and queer mass culture. The pervasive and obvious queerness of Demy's cinema was not acknowledged by film critics until the late 1990s, perhaps in part because contemporary reviewers systematically elided the films' queer dimensions.

By way of a conclusion, I'd like to review these arguments in the light of Demy's most successful film, *Peau d'âne*. As well as being Demy's biggest box-office hit on its

release, *Peau d'âne* continues to be regarded as a classic children's film, and remains very well-known among French people because it is regularly broadcast on television. In *L'Univers de Jacques Demy*, in an interview conducted in the early 1990s, Catherine Deneuve remarked that her role as the Princess in *Peau d'âne* is the role for which she is most frequently recognised in public—specifically by children. Images from *Peau d'âne* take pride of place in 'official' sources of reflection and commemoration on Demy's work, and, above all, function to frame his cinema as whimsical and magical. This response to *Peau d'âne* serves to obscure a second resonance the film has: its appeal to a queer audience through camp humour and an engagement with French gay culture, which recent scholars such as Anne E. Duggan have highlighted.

The film's narrative, based on a fairy tale by Charles Perrault, concerns a Princess (Deneuve), whose father (Jean Marais) demands her hand in marriage. On the advice of her godmother, the Lilac Fairy (Delphine Seyrig), she demands a series of increasingly costly and elaborate dresses from her father, and finally demands the skin of a donkey which excretes the gold and jewels which make the kingdom rich. She runs away in this donkey skin, to live as a scullery maid. The Princess is later seen by a Prince (Jacques Perrin) visiting from another kingdom, who falls in love with her. The film ends with a double wedding: of the Princess to the Prince, and of the King to the Lilac Fairy, whose advice (in song) to the Princess that she can't marry her father turns out to have been part of a plan to marry the King herself.

Peau d'âne illustrates Demy's propensity for double-address as it can be, and has been, read as both a children's film and a gay film. It was released in time for Christmas 1970, and a narrativization of the film, authored by Demy, was published at the same time by a children's publisher, Éditions des deux coqs d'or. This suggests a commercial strategy specifically targeting children. A contemporary review of *Peau*

d'âne in *Jeune cinéma* stated that the film was ideal for five to six year-olds, and praised it for addressing children without condescension (Tournès 1971, 5). The reviewer evidently attended a screening full of children, and wrote that they were especially delighted by the scene in which the old woman spits frogs onto the ground. This is one of several uncomplicated moments of surreal physical comedy suited to a young viewer. In *L'Univers de Jacques Demy* Camille Taboulay, who is introduced as a lifelong fan but who would go on to write a book on Demy, describes attempting to make a cake as a child using the instructions sung by the Princess in the 'Recette pour un Cake d'amour' number. The song's simple, repetitive melody, and instructional lyrics directed to the camera, recall children's television programming of the period.

At the same time as it addresses itself to children, *Peau d'âne* is an 'homage to Jean Cocteau', and appeals to the viewer's knowledge of gay French culture (Duggan 2013, 47). Duggan lists the film's nods to Cocteau, which she argues 'can be read as so many inscriptions in *Donkey Skin* of gay aestheticism or camp which undermines the apparent and disturbing heteronormativity of Perrault's fairy tale' (Duggan 2013, 46). Demy uses techniques such as slow and reverse motion and superimposition, as well as decorative elements such as human statues, to place *Peau d'âne* in a relationship with Cocteau films such as *La Belle et la bête/Beauty and the Beast* (1946) and *Orphée*. The most significant of the film's nods to Cocteau, however, is surely the casting of Jean Marais as the King. Marais was associated with Cocteau not only because of his various roles in Cocteau films (notably as the Beast in *La Belle et la bête*), but because of the pair's highly-publicised romantic relationship. When the King reads a Cocteau verse to his daughter, and refers to Cocteau as one of 'the poets of the future', the fictional King acknowledges the existence of the real Cocteau, and the film wryly acknowledges the existence of their relationship. Duggan writes that, "For the informed adult

viewer...such knowledge about Marais necessarily creates an aesthetic and even ironic distance between actor and role” (50.) The ‘informed adult viewer’ this moment constructs is familiar with French gay culture.

Critics and scholars have only just begun to acknowledge that these two facets of the film—its address to children and its location within a tradition of French gay culture—exist simultaneously. Until recently, scholars such as Rodney Hill still skirted around the film’s invocation of gay culture. Wishing to argue that *Peau d’âne* is more complex than a simple fairy-tale film, Hill describes the film’s extensive references to Cocteau as a sign of Demy’s enduring New Wave practice, rather than the manifestation of a connection between *Peau d’âne* and previous generations of French gay visual culture (Hill 2005, 44). Children tend to be regarded as heterosexual (or pre-heterosexual), and a great deal of culture intended for children, including fairy tale adaptations, is built around heterosexual love narratives. Gay men, furthermore, have long been framed by homophobic discourse as a threat to children and childhood. The perception of heterosexuality as a default sexuality for children, and the perceived incompatibility between queer culture and children’s culture, are two reasons why it took some decades for writing on *Peau d’âne* to acknowledge that the film is indeed both.

In a piece written in verse in the catalogue of *Le Monde enchanté de Jacques Demy*, Olivia Rosenthal makes a very personal case for the queerness of *Peau d’âne*, and for the compatibility of queer culture and childhood. She does not do this with reference to Cocteau, but instead focuses on her own experiences of watching the film as a queer child. She describes an ‘inadequacy between what one sees and what one wants’, faced with an extremely conventional heterosexual narrative (Rosenthal 2013, 162). She writes that, to her mind, it did not seem possible that the Princess could love

the Prince, or that the Lilac Fairy could love the King. In particular, she suggests that Deneuve's rather distant and unenthusiastic performance undermines the character's claims to be in love. Rosenthal articulates a sense that there is something wrong under the surface of all the happiness *Peau d'âne* promises. "Unsaid things weigh heavy", she writes; "the solutions that [fairytales] offer are so improbable that one asks oneself, watching this disproportionate celebration of happiness, if there isn't something fishy going on" (163). The same could be said of other Demy films which offer improbably happy representations of heterosexual love, including *Lola*, *La Baie des Anges* and *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*.

Rosenthal's piece advances the discourse on *Peau d'âne*, from one which focuses on Demy's invocations of gay men's culture to one that explores the queer resonances of Demy's ostensibly heterosexual films. Like *Les Demoiselles*, *Peau d'âne* reflects critically on the means by which heterosexuality is constructed in films of its genre, by offering a camp and hyper-conventional rendering of a familiar heterosexual narrative.

As Rosenthal indicates, the performances in *Peau d'âne* are self-consciously theatrical and unnaturalistic, and suggest a critical distance between the characters and the roles they are playing in this romance. Deneuve exaggerates the Princess's shyness and naivety with self-consciously theatrical gestures and breathy dialogue. While the audience is asked to believe that she is an unworldly teenager, the French viewing public was likely to know that Deneuve had already had her first child when she played a teenager six years previously in *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*. Marais's King, who sits on a throne in the form of a giant white cat, uses outdated, formal language, written perhaps to recall Cocteau's poetic dialogue and to foreground the relationship between the two men. All the characters occasionally speak in verse, or explain what they are doing to themselves, which draws attention to the audience, whom this exposition is

intended to benefit. These performances emphasise that the characters these actors are playing—the Princess, the Prince, the King, the fairy godmother—are stock types, interchangeable between fairy-tales. The story they are acting out is not intended to bear any relation to reality. It is clear then, as Rosenthal intuited as a child, that the film's happy ending is not happy at all, and is merely a generic convention.

The film's costumes make a spectacle out of heterosexual courtship. They are, like those in *Les Demoiselles*, 'oddly costume-like and excessively colour-coordinated' (Virtue 2016, 25). The Princess's demand for three dresses—the colour of the weather, the moon, and the sun, each more brilliant and elaborate than the last—from her father, provides the film with its most spectacular moments. The father's romantic pursuit of his daughter, which might otherwise be more troubling, is instead a game of escalating splendour. The weather dress, which is made of cinema screen material and has moving clouds projected on it, is shown to stun a diegetic audience (fig. 1a). All of the dresses are also showcased in wide shots from the King's perspective (fig. 1 b-c), and Demy also shows the King, in his splendid costume, on his cat throne, from the Princess's perspective (fig. 1d).

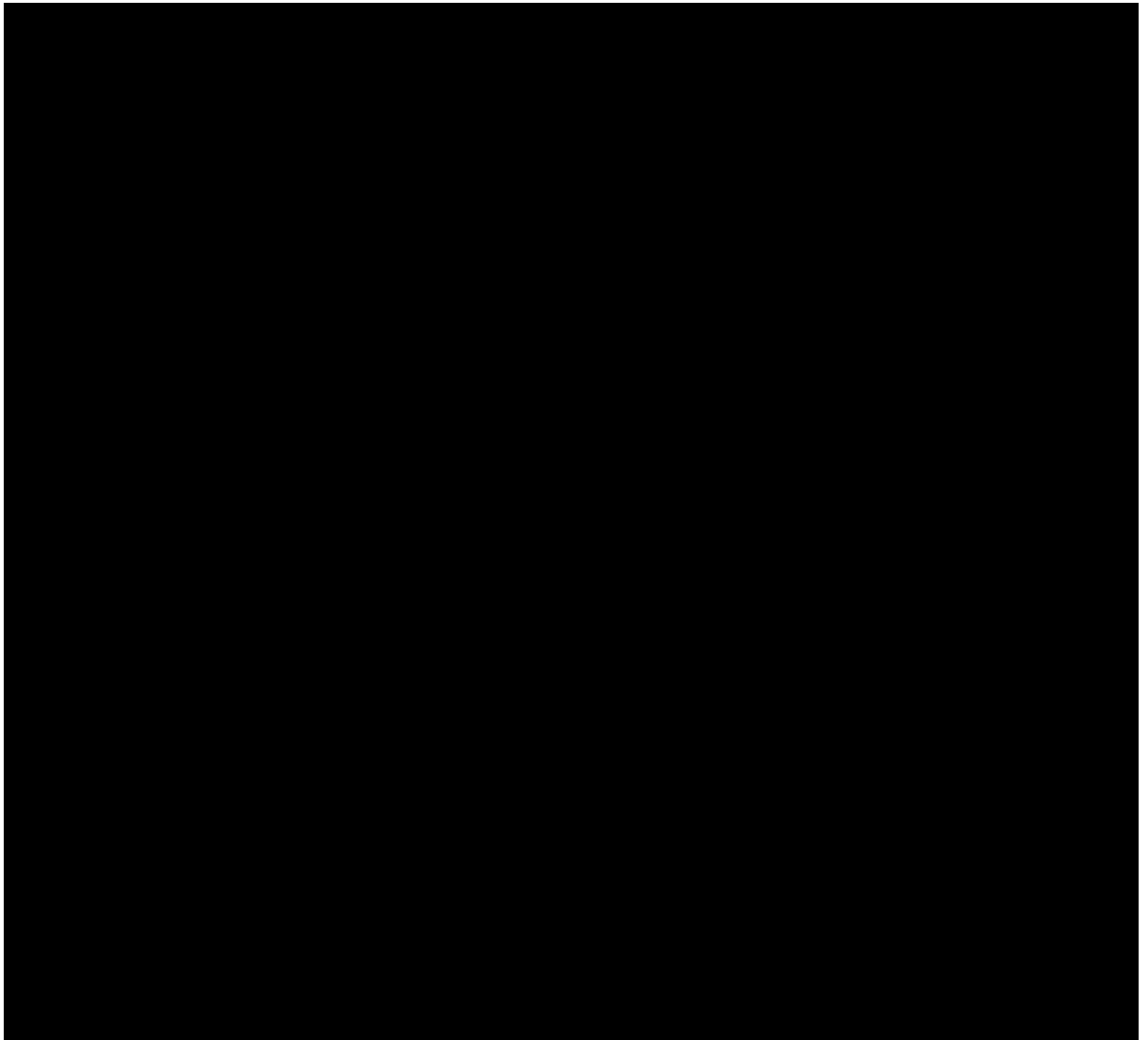


Fig. 1 a-f.

In the Princess's kingdom, the costumes and the horses are blue; in the Prince's kingdom, the same things are red (fig. 1 e-f). This is a whimsical, fun element of the film's design, with no narrative explanation. When the Princess and Prince marry, they both wear white, thus suggesting that their differences have been reconciled and they belong now to the same family. As in *Les Demoiselles*, heterosexual courtship is represented here through a colour system, and is part of a visual spectacle. This denaturalises heterosexuality, and suggests an arbitrary basis for their relationship. The characters are not made for one another, they are merely following a long-established pattern.

Throughout this thesis, I have referred to reviews of Demy's films in order to construct a narrative about how the filmmaker was marginalised because of his queer- and feminine-coded cinema. The reception of *Peau d'âne* provides another piece of this narrative. Two separate contemporary reviews said that the film resembled a 'shop window', a remark which suggests meaningless, commercial decorative spectacle (Tessier 1971, 135; Ciment 1971, 76). More broadly, reviews in film journals tended to describe the film's style with distaste, as gaudy, chaotic and excessive. Few critics in film journals acknowledged that the film was intended in part for an audience of children, who might enjoy the film's bright colours, spectacular costumes and zany humour more than an adult film critic would. In the reception of this film, and others, Demy is perceived as having poor taste, and decorating to excess by accident, rather than on purpose. There is an undertone of homophobia in these remarks, which are consonant with criticisms made over the preceding decade of his career that Demy was a mere 'aesthete': flamboyant, with no substance.

My archival research has revealed the blind spots and biases in French critical culture that saw Demy's film cast as marginal and culturally insignificant. The perception of Demy as minor, odd and unsuccessful clung to him, made it harder for him to work, and ensured that his cinema would reveal no significant scholarly attention until some years after his death. Although he is not necessarily well-placed to evaluate Demy's cinema, the straight male critic's perspective comes to dominate because he has institutional power, and his words are published and archived. The perspectives of women viewers, and queer viewers, can occasionally be inferred, but by and large are simply not recorded. Future research into underrepresented fans and audiences of

Demy's cinema, who did not have access to these formal critical structures, would have the potential to transform the landscape of French film studies.

My aim has not been to advocate for Demy to be integrated into existing canons, but to use his example to challenge the hierarchies of value that are the foundations of the film canon. Demy's case is unusual, and is therefore well-placed to illustrate the biases inherent in this process. For most of his career, Demy was regarded as a failed and minor filmmaker; his work was largely written out of French film history, and much of it was not available on DVD before 2008. Yet it was able to survive, and gain in status, because he had a small number of popular hits, and a partner who had the skills and resources to restore and promote his film. Other filmmakers whose work was found atypical or low in quality by a biased critical culture have not had the same fortune.

To return to Janet Staiger: the politics of canon formation is "a politics of power" (Staiger 1986, 10). Canon formation is regarded as a natural process, reflecting the quality and value of works of art, only because the taste and culture of dominant social groups (white, male, heterosexual, intellectual) is regarded as universal and superior. I have tried to denaturalise these hierarchies of taste and value in my study of Demy, by valorising what generations of critics denigrated in his cinema: his use of 'low' genres and unrealistic styles, his many commercial (and arguably artistic) failures, and his obvious debt to queer and women's cultures. I have politicised Demy's failure, as I believe that it is a queer failure, the consequence of making sad, tender, queer art in a hostile culture. In other words, I have deliberately embraced all the missteps and contradictions in this body of work, because in its very inconsistency, queerness and lack of restraint, Jacques Demy's cinema was challenging, beautiful, and radical.

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Filmography

Jacques Demy

Lola. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Rome-Paris Films.

France, 1960.

Main cast: Anouk Aimée (Lola), Marc Michel (Roland Cassard), Jacques Harden (Michel), Alan Scott (Frankie), Elina Labourdette (Madame Desnoyers).

La Luxure, from the anthology film *Les Sept péché capitaux*. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Joseph Bercholz/Franco-London Film.

France, 1962.

Main cast: Laurent Terzieff (Jacques), Jean-Louis Trintignant (Bernard), Jean Desailly (the father), Micheline Presle (the mother).

La Baie des Anges. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Sud-Pacifique Films.

France, 1963.

Main cast: Jeanne Moreau (Jacqueline Demaistre), Claude Mann (Jean Fournier), Paul Guers (Caron), Henri Nassiet (M. Fournier).

Les Parapluies de Cherbourg. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Parc Film-Madeleine Film/Munich Film.

France/West Germany, 1964.

Main cast: Catherine Deneuve (Geneviève Emery), Nino Castelnuovo (Guy Foucher), Anne Vernon (Mme Emery), Marc Michel (Roland Cassard), Ellen Farner (Madeleine), Mireille Perrey (Elise).

Les Demoiselles de Rochefort. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Parc Film-Madeleine Film.

France, 1967.

Main cast: Catherine Deneuve (Delphine Garnier), Françoise Dorléac (Solange Garnier), Danielle Darrieux (Yvonne Garnier), Jacques Perrin (Maxence), Michel Piccoli (Simon Dame), Gene Kelly (Andy Miller), George Chakiris (Etienne), Grover Dale (Bill), Jacques Riberolles (Guillaume Lancien).

Model Shop. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Columbia Pictures.

USA, 1968.

Main cast: Anouk Aimée (Lola/Cécile), Gary Lockwood (George), Alexandra Hay (Gloria).

Peau d'âne. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Parc Film – Marianne Productions.

France, 1970.

Main cast: Catherine Deneuve (first Queen, Princess), Jean Marais (King), Jacques Perrin (Prince), Micheline Presle (second Queen), Fernand Ledoux (second King), Delphine Seyrig (Lilac Fairy).

The Pied Piper. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Sagittarius Productions/Goodtimes Enterprises.

United Kingdom/USA, 1971.

Main cast: Donovan (the Pied Piper), Jack Wild (Gavin), Donald Pleasance (the baron), John Hurt (Franz), Michael Hordern (Melius), Roy Kinnear (Burgermeister Poppendick).

L'Événement le plus important depuis que l'homme a marché sur la lune. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Lira Film/Roas Produzioni.

France/Italy, 1973.

Main cast: Catherine Deneuve (Irène de Fontenoy), Marcello Mastroianni (Marco Mazetti), Micheline Presle (Dr Delavigne), Raymond Gérôme (Dr Chaumont), Claude Melkhi (Lucien Soumain).

Lady Oscar. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Kitty Films/Shiseido/NTV/Toho.

Japan/France, 1979.

Main cast: Catriona MacColl (Oscar-François de Jarjayes), Barry Stokes (André Grandier), Christina Bohm (Marie-Antoinette), Jonas Bergstrom (Hans Axel von Fersen), Terence Budd (Louis XVI).

La Naissance du Jour. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Amaya/Technisonor/FR3.

France, 1980.

Main cast: Danièle Delorme (Colette), Dominique Sanda (Hélène Clément), Jean Sorel (Vial), Orane Demazis (Sido), Guy Dhers (Villebreuf).

Une chambre en ville. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Progéfi/TF1/UGC.

France, 1982.

Main cast: Dominique Sanda (Edith Leroyer), Richard Berry (François Guilbaud), Danielle Darrieux (Margot Langlois), Michel Piccoli (Edmond Leroyer), Fabienne Guyon (Violette Pelletier).

Parking. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Garance.

France/Japan 1985.

Main cast: Francis Huster (Orphée), Laurent Malet (Calaïs), Keiko Ito (Eurydice), Gérard Klein (Aristée), Marie-France Pisier (Claude Perséphone), Jean Marais (Hadès), Hugues Quester (Caron), Eva Darlan (Dominique Daniel).

Trois places pour le 26. Dir. Jacques Demy, Prod. Claude Berri for Renn Productions.

France, 1988.

Main cast: Yves Montand (himself), Mathilda May (Marion), Françoise Fabian (Marie-Hélène de Lambert), Patrick Fierry (Toni Fontaine).

Other

17 fois Cécile Cassard/Seventeen Times Cécile Cassard, Dir. Christophe Honoré, Prod. Sepia Production/Fox Pathé Europa.

France, 2002.

Main cast: Béatrice Dalle (Cécile Cassard), Romain Duris (Matthieu), Jeanne Balibar (Edith).

2001: A Space Odyssey. Dir. Stanley Kubrick, Prod. Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer.

USA, 1968.

Main cast: Keir Dullea (Dr David Bowman), Gary Lockwood (Dr Frank Poole), William Sylvester (Dr Heywood Floyd), Douglas Rain (the voice of HAL 9000).

A Bout de souffle/Breathless. Dir. Jean-Luc Godard, Prod. Les Films Impéria/Les Productions Georges de Beauregard/Société Nouvelle de Cinématographie.

France, 1960.

Main cast: Jean-Paul Belmondo (Michel Poiccard), Jean Seberg (Patricia Franchini).

A Double tour/Web of Passion. Dir. Claude Chabrol, Prod. Panitalia/Paris Film/Titanus.

France/Italy, 1960.

Main cast: Madelene Robinson (Thérèse Marcoux), Antonella Lualdi (Léda), Jean-Paul Belmondo (Laszlo Kovacs), Jacques Dacqmine (Henri Marcoux).

A propos de Nice. Dir. Jean Vigo and Boris Kaufman, Prod. Gaumont-Franco-Film-Aubert.

France, 1930.

A Star is Born. Dir. George Cukor, Prod. Warner Bros.

USA, 1956.

Main cast: Judy Garland (Esther Blodgett), James Mason (Norman Maine), Jack Carson (Matt Libby).

All that Heaven Allows. Dir. Douglas Sirk, Prod. Universal Pictures.

USA, 1955.

Main cast: Jane Wyman (Cary Scott), Rock Hudson (Ron Kirby), Agnes Moorhead (Sara Warren), Conrad Nagel (Harvey), Virginia Grey (Alida Anderson), Gloria Talbott (Kay Scott).

An American in Paris. Dir. Vincente Minnelli, Prod. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

USA, 1951.

Main cast: Gene Kelly (Jerry Mulligan), Leslie Caron (Lise Bouvier), Oscar Levant (Adam Cook), Georges Guétary (Henri "Hank" Baurel), Nina Fock (Milo Roberts).

Ascenseur pour l'échafaud/Elevator to the Gallows. Dir. Louis Malle, Prod. Nouvelles Éditions de Films.

France, 1958.

Main cast: Jeanne Moreau (Florence Carala), Maurice Ronet (Julien Tavernier), Georges Poujouly (Louis), Yori Bertin (Véronique), Jean Wall (Simon Carala).

Band Wagon. Dir. Vincente Minnelli, Prod. Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer.
USA, 1953.

Main cast: Fred Astaire (Tony Hunter), Cyd Charisse (Gabrielle Gerard), Oscar Levant (Lester Marton), Nanette Fabray (Lily Marton), Jack Buchanan (Jeffrey Cordova).

Bande à part/Band of Outsiders. Dir. Jean-Luc Godard, Prod. Columbia Films, Anouchka Films, Orsay Films.
France, 1964.

Main cast: Anna Karina (Odile), Sami Frey (France), Claude Brasseur (Arthur).

Belle de Jour. Dir. Luis Buñuel, Prod. Robert et Raymond Hakim/Paris Film Productions.

France/Italy, 1967.

Main cast: Catherine Deneuve (Séverine Serizy), Jean Sorel (Pierre Serizy), Michel Piccoli (Henri Husson), Geneviève Page (Madame Anaïs).

Brief Encounter. Dir. David Lean, Prod. Cineguild.

UK, 1945.

Main cast: Celia Johnson (Laura Jesson), Trevor Howard (Dr Alec Harvey).

Ça n'arrive qu'à d'autres/It Only Happens to Others. Dir. Nadine Trintignant, Prod. Les Films 13/Marianne Productions/Mars Film.

France/Italy, 1971.

Main cast: Catherine Deneuve (Catherine), Marcello Mastroianni (Marcello), Serge Marquand (Catherine's brother), Dominique Labourier (Marguerite), Danièle Lebrun (Sophie).

Carol. Dir. Todd Haynes, Prod. Number 9 Films/Killer Films/Film4 Productions.

USA, 2015.

Main cast: Cate Blanchett (Carol Aird), Rooney Mara (Therese Belivet), Sarah Paulson (Abby Gerhard), Jake Lacy (Richard Semco), Kyle Chandler (Harge Aird).

Charlotte For Ever. Dir. Serge Gainsbourg, Prod. G.P.F.I./Constellation Productions.
France, 1986.

Main cast: Charlotte Gainsbourg (Charlotte), Serge Gainsbourg (Stan), Roland Bertin (Leon), Roland Dubillard (Herman).

Cléo de 5 à 7/Cleo from 5 to 7. Dir. Agnès Varda, Prod. Rome Paris Films.

France, 1961.

Main cast: Corinne Marchand (Cléo), Antoine Bourseiller (Antoine), Doninique Davray (Angèle), Dorothee Blank (Dorothee), Michel Legrand (Bob).

Der blaue Engel/The Blue Angel. Dir. Joseph von Sternberg, Prod. UFA Tomfilm/Universum Film.

Germany, 1930.

Main cast: Emil Jannings (Prof. Immanuel Rath), Marlene Dietrich (Lola Lola).

Encore/Once More. Dir. Paul Vecchiali, Prod. Diagonale/Le Sept.
France, 1988.

Main cast: Jean-Louis Roland (Louis), Florence Giorgetti (Sybèle), Pascale Rocard (Anne-Marie), Nicolas Silberg (Ivan), Patrick Raynal (Frantz).

Far from Heaven. Dir. Todd Haynes, Prod. Consolidated Film Industries/TF1
Cinema/Section Eight/Vulcan Productions/Killer Films.
USA, 2002.

Main cast: Julianne Moore (Cathy Whitaker), Dennis Quaid (Frank Whitaker), Dennis Haysbert (Raymond Deagan), Patricia Clarkson (Eleanor Fine), Viola Davis (Sybil).

Five Easy Pieces. Dir. Bob Rafelson, Prod. Columbia Pictures.
USA, 1970.

Main cast: Jack Nicholson (Robert "Bobby" Dupea), Karen Black (Rayette Dipesto), Susan Anspach (Catherine van Oost), Lois Smith (Partita Dupea), Ralph Waite (Carl Dupea).

Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed. Dir. Terence Fisher, Prod. Hammer Film Productions.
UK, 1969.

Main cast: Peter Cushing (Baron Victor Frankenstein), Veronica Carlson (Anna Spengler), George Pravda (Dr Frederick Brandt), Freddie Jones (Professor Richter), Simon Ward (Dr Karl Holst).

Home from the Hill. Dir. Vincente Minnelli, Prod. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
USA, 1960.

Main cast: Robert Mitchum (Wade Hunnicutt), Eleanor Parker (Hannah Hunnicutt), George Peppard (Rafe Copley), George Hamilton (Theron Hunnicutt).

Imitation of Life. Dir. Douglas Sirk, Prod. Universal Pictures.
USA, 1959.

Main cast: Lana Turner (Lora Meredith), Juanita Moore (Annie Johnson), John Gavin (Steve Archer), Sandra Dee (Susie), Susan Kohner (Sarah Jane).

Jacquot de Nantes. Dir. Agnès Varda, Prod. Ciné-Tamaris.
France, 1991.

Main cast: Philippe Maron (Jacquot 1), Edouard Joubeaud (Jacquot 2), Laurent Monnier (Jacquot 3), Brigitte de Villepoix (the mother), Daniel Dublet (the father).

Je Vous Salue Marie/Hail Mary. Dir. Jean-Luc Godard, Prod. Sara Films/Pégase
Films/JLG Films.
France, 1985.

Main cast: Myrien Roussel (Marie), Thierry Rode (Joseph), Philippe Lacoste (The angel Gabriel).

Jean de Florette. Dir. Claude Berri, Prod. DD Productions, Films A2, RAI
Radiotelevisione Italiana.
France/Italy/Switzerland, 1986.

Main cast: Yves Montand (César Soubeyran), Gérard Depardieu (Jean de Florette), Daniel Auteuil (Ugolin), Élisabeth Depardieu (Aimée Cardoret).

Jules et Jim. Dir. François Truffaut, Prod. Les Films du Carosse/Sédif Productions.
France, 1962.

Main cast: Jeanne Moreau (Catherine), Oscar Werner (Jules), Henri Serre (Jim).

L'As des as/Ace of Aces. Dir. Gérard Oury, Prod. Cerito Films, Gaumont International, Rialto Film.

France/Germany, 1982.

Main cast: Jean-Paul Belmondo (Jo Cavalier), Marie-France Pisier (Gaby Delcourt), Rachid Ferrache (Simon Rosenblum), Frank Hoffman (Gunther von Beckman), Gunter Meisner (Adolf Hitler).

L'Homme blessé/The Wounded Man. Dir. Patrice Chéreau, Prod. Gaumont/AJO Distribution/Partner's Productions.

France, 1983.

Main cast: Jean-Hughes Anglade (Henri), Vito Mezzogiorno (Jean Lerman), Roland Bertin (Bosmans).

L'Univers de Jacques Demy/The World of Jacques Demy. Dir. Agnès Varda, Prod. Ciné-Tamaris.

France 1993.

La Belle et la bête/Beauty and the Beast. Dir. Jean Cocteau, Prod. DisCina.

France, 1946.

Main cast: Jean Marais (The Beast/The Prince/Avenant), Josette Day (Belle), Marcel André (Belle's father).

La Cagna/Liza. Dir. Marco Ferreri, Prod. Pegaso Cinematografica/Lira Films.

Italy/France, 1972.

Main cast: Catherine Deneuve (Liza), Marcello Mastroianni (Giorgio), Corinne Marchand (Giorgio's wife), Michel Piccoli (Giorgio's friend), Pascal Laperrousaz (Giorgio's son).

La Dolce Vita. Dir. Federico Fellini, Prod. Riama Film, Pathé Consortium Cinéma, Gray Film.

Italy/France, 1960.

Main cast: Marcello Mastroianni (Marcello Rubini), Anite Ekberg (Sylvia), Anouk Aimée (Maddalena), Yvonne Furneaux (Emma).

La Marseillaise. Dir. Jean Renoir, Prod. Société d'Exploitation et de Distribution de Films, Confédération Générale du Travail.

France, 1938.

Main cast: Pierre Renoir (Louis XVI), Lise Delamare (Marie-Antoinette), Léon Laverie (Picard).

La Pudeur ou l'impudeur, Dir. Hervé Guibert, Prod. TF1.

France, 1992.

La Puritaine/The Prude. Dir. Jacques Doillon, Prod. Philippe Dussard/La Sept Cinéma/Man's Films et al.
France, 1986.

Main cast: Michel Piccoli (Pierre), Sabine Azéma (Ariane), Sandrine Bonnaire (Manon), Laurent Malet (François).

La Vie est à nous/Life Belongs to Us. Dir. Jacques Becker, Jacques B. Brunius, Henri Cartier-Bresson et al, Prod. Collective Films/Parti Communiste français.
France, 1936.

Le Beau serge. Dir. Claude Chabrol, Prod. Ajym Films/Coopérative Générale du Cinéma Français.
France, 1959.

Main cast: Gérard Blain (Serge), Jean-Claude Brialy (François Baillou), Michèle Mériz (Yvonne), Bernadette Lafont (Marie).

Le Petit soldat/The Little Soldier. Dir. Jean-Luc Godard, Prod. Les Productions de Georges de Beauregard/Société Nouvelle de Cinématographie.
France, 1960.

Main cast: Michel Subor (Bruno Forestier), Anna Karina (Veronica Dreyer), Henri-Jacques Huet (Jacques).

Leave Her To Heaven. Dir. John Stahl, Prod. Twentieth Century Fox.
USA, 1945.

Main cast: Gene Tierney (Ellen Berent Harland), Cornel Wilde (Richard Harland), Jeanne Crain (Ruth Berent), Vincent Price (Russell Quinton).

Les Amants/The Lovers. Dir. Louis Malle, Prod. Nouvelles Éditions de Films.
France, 1958.

Main cast: Jeanne Moreau (Jeanne Tournier), Jean-Marc Bory (Bernard Dubois-Lambert).

Les Bonnes femmes. Dir. Claude Chabrol, Prod. Paris Film/Panitalia.
France/Italy, 1960.

Main cast: Bernadette Lafont (Jane), Clotilde Joano (Jacqueline), Stéphane Audran (Ginette), Lucille Saint-Simon (Rita).

Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne. Dir. Robert Bresson, Prod. Les Films Raoul Ploquin.
France, 1945.

Main cast: Paul Bernard (Jean), Maria Casares (Hélène), Elina Labourdette (Agnès).

Les Demoiselles ont eu 25 ans/The Young Girls Turn 25. Dir. Agnès Varda, Prod. Ciné-Tamaris.
France, 1992.

Les Enfants Terribles. Dir. Jean-Pierre Melville, Prod. O.G.C.
France, 1950.

Main cast: Jean Cocteau (narrator), Nicole Stéphanie (Élisabeth), Édouard Dermit (Paul), Jacques Bernard (Gérard), Renée Cosima (Agathe/Dargelos).

Les Nuits fauves/Savage Nights. Dir. Cyril Collard, Prod. Banfilm/La Sept Cinéma/Société Nouvelle de Cinématographie.
France, 1992.

Main cast : Cyril Collard (Jean), Romane Bohringer (Laura), Clémentine Célarié (Marianne), Maria Schneider (Noria), Carlos López (Samy).

Les Plages d'Agnès/The Beaches of Agnès. Dir. Agnès Varda, Prod. Ciné-Tamaris/ARTE Cinema France.
France, 2008.

Let's Make Love. Dir. George Cukor, Prod. Twentieth Century Fox.
USA, 1960.

Main cast: Marilyn Monroe (Amanda Dell), Yves Montand (Jean-Marc Clement), Tony Randall (Coffman), Frankie Vaughan (Tony), Wilfrid Hyde-White (Welch).

Louise. Dir. Abel Gance, Prod. Société Parisienne de Production de Films.
France, 1939.

Main cast: Grace Moore (Louise), Georges Thill (Julien), André Pernet (Louise's father), Suzanne Desprès (Louise's mother).

Mauvais sang/The Night is Young. Dir. Leos Carax, Prod. Les Films Plain Chant, Soprofilms, FR3 Films Production.
France/Switzerland, 1986.

Main cast: Michel Piccoli (Marc), Juliette Binoche (Anna), Denis Lavant (Alex), Hans Meyer (Hans), Julie Delpy (Lise).

Mildred Pierce. Dir. Michael Curtiz, Prod. Warner Bros.
USA, 1945.

Main cast: Joan Crawford (Mildred Pierce), Jack Carson (Wally Fay), Zachary Scott (Monte Bergaron), Eve Arden (Ida Corwin), Ann Blyth (Veda Pierce).

On a Clear Day You Can See Forever. Dir. Vincente Minnelli, Prod. Paramount Pictures.
USA, 1970.

Main cast: Barbra Streisand (Daisy Gamble), Yves Montand (Marc Chabot), Bob Newhart (Warren Pratt).

Orphans of the Storm. Dir. D.W. Griffith, Prod. D.W. Griffith Inc.
USA, 1921.

Main cast: Lillian Gish (Henriette Girard), Dorothy Gish (Louise), Joseph Schildkraut (Chevalier de Vaudrey), Frank Losee (Count de Linières), Catherine Emmet (Countess de Linières).

Orphée. Dir. Jean Cocteau, Prod. Aundre Paulve Films/Films du Palais Royal.
France, 1950.

Main cast: Jean Marais (Orphée), François Périer (Heurtebise), Maria Casares (The Princess – Death), Marie Déa (Eurydice), Juliette Gréco (Aglaonice).

Peeping Tom. Dir. Michael Power, Prod. Michael Powell.
UK, 1960.

Main cast: Carl Boehm (Mark Lewis), Anna Massey (Helen Stephens).

Potiche. Dir. François Ozon, Prod. Mandarin Films/FOZ/France 2 Cinéma.
France, 2010.

Main cast: Catherine Deneuve (Suzanne Pujol), Gérard Depardieu (Maurice Babin), Fabrice Luchini (Robert Pujol), Karin Viard (Nadège Dumoulin), Judith Godrèche (Joëlle Pujol), Jérémie Rénier (Laurent Pujol).

Pourvu qu'on ait l'ivresse. Dir. Jean-Daniel Pollet.
France, 1957.

Main cast: Claude Melki (young man).

Querelle. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Prod. Planet Film, Albatros Filmproduktion, Gaumont.

West Germany/France, 1982.

Main cast: Brad Davis (Querelle), Franco Nero (Lieutenant Seblon), Jeanne Moreau (Lysiane), Laurent Malet (Roger Bataille), Hanno Pöschl (Robert/Gil).

Return to Paradise. Dir. Mark Robson, Prod. Aspen Productions.
USA, 1953.

Main cast: Gary Cooper (Mr Morgan), Barry Jones (Pastor Thomas Cobbett), Roberta Haynes (Maeva), Moira Walker (Turia).

Singin' in the Rain. Dir. Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, Prod. Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer.
USA, 1952.

Main cast: Gene Kelly (Don Lockwood), Donald O'Connor (Cosmo Brown), Debbie Reynolds (Kathy Selden), Jean Hagen (Lina Lamont).

Some Like It Hot. Dir. Billy Wilder, Prod. United Artists.
USA, 1959.

Main cast: Marilyn Monroe (Sugar "Kane" Kowalczyk), Tony Curtis (Joe/"Josephine"), Jack Lemmon (Jerry/"Daphne").

Stella Dallas. Dir. King Vidor, Prod. Samuel Goldwyn Productions.
USA, 1937.

Main cast: Barbara Stanwyck (Stella Dallas), John Boles (Stephen Dallas), Anne Shirley (Laurel Dallas).

Sunset Boulevard. Dir. Billy Wilder, Prod. Paramount Pictures.
USA, 1951.

Main cast: William Holden (Joe Gillis), Gloria Swanson (Norma Desmond), Erich von Stroheim (Max von Mayerling), Nancy Olson (Betty Schaefer).

Tea and Sympathy. Dir. Vincente Minnelli, Prod. Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer.
USA, 1956.

Main cast: Deborah Kerr (Laura Reynolds), John Kerr (Tom Robinson Lee), Leif Erickson (Bill Reynolds), Edward Andrews (Herb Lee).

The Barkleys of Broadway. Dir. Charles Walters, Prod. Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer.
USA, 1949.

Main cast: Fred Astaire (Josh Barkley), Ginger Rogers (Dinah Barkley), Oscar Levant (Ezra Miller), Billie Burke (Mrs Livingston Belney), Gale Robbins (Shirlene May), Jacques François (Jacques Pierre Barredout).

The Graduate. Dir. Mike Nichols, Prod. Lawrence Turman Productions.
USA, 1967.

Main cast: Anne Bancroft (Mrs Robinson), Dustin Hoffman (Benjamin Braddock), Katharine Ross (Elaine Robinson), William Daniels (Mr Braddock).

The Pirate. Dir. Vincente Minnelli, Prod. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
USA, 1948.

Main cast: Judy Garland (Manuela), Gene Kelly (Serafin), Walter Slezak (Don Petro Vargas), Gladys Cooper (Aunt Inez).

The Searchers. Dir. John Ford, Prod. Warner Bros.
USA, 1956.

Main cast: John Wayne (Ethan Edwards), Jeffrey Hunter (Martin Pawley), Vera Miles (Laurie Jorgensen), Ward Bond (Samuel Johnson Clayton), Natalie Wood (Debbie Edwards).

Tirez sur le pianiste/Shoot the Piano Player. Dir. François Truffaut, Prod. Les Films de la Pléiade.
France, 1960.

Main cast: Charles Aznavour (Charlie Kohler/Edoard Saroyan), Marie Dubois (Léna), Nicole Berger (Thérèse Saroyan), Michèle Mercier (Clarisse).

Top Hat. Dir. Mark Sandrich, Prod. RKO Radio Pictures.
USA, 1935.

Main cast: Fred Astaire (Jerry Travers), Ginger Rogers (Dale Tremont), Edward Everett Horton (Horace Hardwick), Erik Rhodes (Alberto Beddini), Helen Broderick (Madge Hardwick).

Une femme est une femme/A Woman is a Woman. Dir. Jean-Luc Godard, Prod. Euro International Films/Rome Paris Films.
France, 1961.

Main cast: Anna Karina (Angela Récamier), Jean-Claude Brial (Émile), Jean-Paul Belmondo (Alfred Lubitsch).

Une simple histoire/A Simple Story. Dir. Marcel Hanoun, Prod. Marcel Hanoun.
France, 1959.

Main cast: Miceline Bezançon (the mother), Elizabeth Huart (the daughter).

West Side Story. Dir. Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise. Prod. The Mirisch Corporation/Seven Arts Productions.
USA, 1961.

Main cast: Natalie Wood (Maria), Richard Beymer (Tony), Rita Moreno (Anita), George Chakiris (Bernardo), Russ Tamblyn (Riff).

Written on the Wind. Dir. Douglas Sirk, Prod. Universal Pictures.
USA, 1956.

Main cast: Rock Hudson (Mitch Wayne), Lauren Bacall (Lucy Moore Hadley), Robert Stack (Kyle Hadley), Dorothy Malone (Marylee Hadley).

Zéro de conduite/Zero for Conduct. Dir. Jean Vigo, Prod. Argui-Films.
France, 1933.

Main cast: Gérard de Bédarieux (Tabard), Louis Lefebvre (Caussat), Gilbert Pruncheon (Colin), Coco Golstein (Brue).

Zouzou. Dir. Marc Allégret, Prod. Les Films H. Rousillon/Productions Arys.
France, 1934.

Main cast : Josephine Baker (Zouzou), Jean Gabin (Jean), Pierre Larquey (Papa Melé), Yvette Lebon (Claire).

Teleography

Achter Het Scherm/Derrière l'écran. Dir. André Delvaux and François Beukelaers, Prod. Belgische Radio en Televisie. Belgium, 1966.

“Field Trip”. *Mad Men*. Series 4, episode 3. Dir. Christopher Manley. Prod. Lionsgate Television/Warner Bros./American Movie Classics (AMC). USA, 2014.

“*Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*”. *Il était une fois....* Series 1, episode 5. Dir. Marie Genin. Prod. Folamour Productions. France, 2008.

“Jacques Demy à propos de *Model Shop*”. *Chronique cinéma*. Dir: Georges Dumoulin. France, 1969.